



Be **SAFE**

*Safe, Affirming & Fair
Environments*

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Extension



Be SAFE

Safe, Affirming & Fair Environments

Be SAFE: Safe, Affirming and Fair Environments is a Michigan State University (MSU) Extension curriculum designed to help young people aged 11 to 14 and adults work in partnership to create environments that are physically and emotionally safe. While the primary audiences for Be SAFE are young people and adults involved in out-of-school time settings (such as after-school programs, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, Scouts, Y's, sports programs and faith-based programs), it also applies to middle school settings. Be SAFE focuses on education and prevention of bullying, bias, harassment and other hurtful behaviors – as well as providing suggestions for intervening when young people are affected by these issues. It draws from extensive research from a variety of key disciplines – as well as from evidence-based bullying prevention programs.

The overall Be SAFE goals are to:

- ▶ Promote social and emotional learning and development.
- ▶ Address and reduce bullying.
- ▶ Prevent bullying behaviors by tapping the wisdom and assets of youth and adults.
- ▶ Develop positive relationships with peers and adults.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Visit Be SAFE bullying prevention resources and events on the web:

<http://msue.anr.msu.edu/topic/info/bullying>

Purchase the Be SAFE curriculum:

Be Safe (HNI 101) is available in print and electronic file (PDF) versions through the MSUE Bookstore. To purchase the full curriculum or download a free PDF file copy of the Introduction, visit shop.msu.edu and search for “Be SAFE.”





Be SAFE Introduction

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Be SAFE Acknowledgments

Be SAFE: Safe, Affirming and Fair Environments was conceived, developed and written with deep gratitude to all the young people, adults and scholars who have shaped our thinking over the past two decades about these incredibly important issues in the lives of kids, families and communities.

During 2012, adults involved with a variety of out-of-school-time sites around Michigan generously stepped forward to become pilot sites for the Be SAFE curriculum. Their commitment to work with their young people to “try on” and “try out” the curriculum design and activities – as well as their willingness to provide thoughtful feedback – has been instrumental in strengthening this material. Our thanks goes to all of the young people and adult leaders at the following Michigan pilot sites, as well as to the MSU Extension staff members who served as liaisons to these sites:

- ▶ **The Boys & Girls Club of Alpena, Alpena.** Site leader: Matt Muszynski; MSUE liaison: Carolyn Penniman
- ▶ **Branch County Coalition Against Domestic Violence Youth Program, Coldwater.** Site leader: Jenny Rufenacht; MSUE liaison: Suzanne Pish
- ▶ **Branch County 4-H FRIENDS Nutrition and Health Day Camp, Coldwater.** Site leader: Jenny Rufenacht; MSUE liaison: Suzanne Pish
- ▶ **Camp Fire USA West Michigan Afterschool and Summer Programs, Grand Rapids.** Site leaders: Pam Bland, Evita Iyire, Kohan Kolleh, Tashara Stanley, Brianne Tuinstra and Ericka VanderLaan; MSUE liaison: Holly Tired
- ▶ **Central Lake 21st Century Afterschool Program, Central Lake.** Site leader: Jenny Shooks; MSUE liaison: Denise Aungst
- ▶ **The Boys & Girls Club South Oakland County ‘field Zone Afterschool Program, Southfield.** Site leaders: Meredith Luckey, Linda Nabers and Vania Smith; MSUE liaison: Julie Scislowicz
- ▶ **Mt. Zion 4-H Club, Detroit.** Site leaders: Jacqueline Donaldson-Barber and Sandra Griffin; MSUE liaison: Sandra Griffin
- ▶ **Sault Area Middle School Afterschool Program, Sault Ste. Marie.** Site leader: Austin Lowes; MSUE liaison: Andrea Caron
- ▶ **Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians Youth Program, St. Ignace.** Site leader: Sue St. Onge; MSUE liaison: Tracie Abram

We are also indebted to the contributions of those who served as reviewers of the curriculum. Their critical feedback and powerful suggestions have significantly improved this material.

- ▶ **Tracie Abram**, Extension Educator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Denise Aungst**, Extension Educator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Hannah Davidson**, Teen Reviewer
- ▶ **Jennifer Esch**, Security Awareness Leader, GE Capital Business, and former Consumer Programs Administrator, Michigan Attorney General’s Office
- ▶ **Kendra Moyses**, Associate Program Leader, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Suzanne Pish**, Extension Educator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Dionardo Pizaña**, Diversity and Personnel Specialist, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Erin Ross**, Extension Educator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Olga Santiago**, Ph.D., Extension Specialist and Program Evaluator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Lawrence Schiamberg**, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Human Development and Families Studies, MSU
- ▶ **Jodi Schulz**, Extension Educator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Holly Tired**, Extension Educator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Michael Wallace**, Extension Educator, Washington State University Extension

Finally, we want to recognize and thank **Lisa Laughman**, Emotional Wellness Consultant and Director of Wisdom Heart Life, who provided invaluable contributions to the development of this curriculum.

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Production

Production of this book was coordinated by ANR Communications (anrcom.msu.edu), Michigan State University Extension.

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Welcome to Be SAFE!

Be SAFE: *Safe, Affirming and Fair Environments* is a Michigan State University (MSU) Extension initiative designed to help young people aged 11 to 14 and adults work in partnership to create environments that are physically and emotionally safe. While the primary audiences for Be SAFE are young people and adults involved in out-of-school time settings (such as after-school programs, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, Scouts, Y's, sports programs and faith-based programs), the effort also applies to middle school settings. Be SAFE focuses on education and prevention of bullying, bias, harassment and other hurtful behaviors – as well as providing suggestions for intervening when young people are affected by these issues. It draws from extensive research from a variety of key disciplines – as well as from evidence-based bullying prevention programs.

The overall goals of Be SAFE are to:

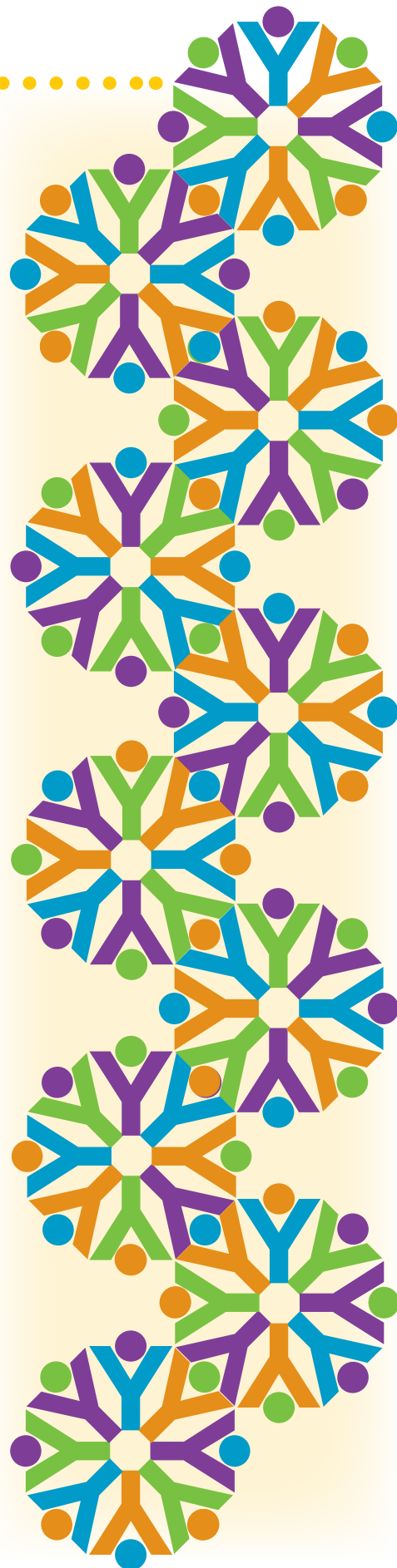
- ▶ Promote social and emotional learning and development.
- ▶ Address and reduce bullying.
- ▶ Prevent bullying behaviors by tapping the wisdom and assets of youth and adults.
- ▶ Develop positive relationships with peers and adults.

What Makes Be SAFE Unique?

Be SAFE Is Grounded in Positive Youth Development

Bullying is widespread in the United States and of great concern to many young people, families, educators, youth workers and other community members. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012), bullying is a form of youth violence that can cause physical injury, social and emotional distress, and even death. Bullying has serious consequences that put youth at higher risk for substance abuse, academic problems, mental health issues and violence in adolescence and adulthood.

While these concerns are valid, a focus on “preventing” bullying is not enough. Too many programs come from a deficit approach and focus on bullying as a set of problem behaviors to be eliminated and prevented. In addition, these prevention efforts often frame the issue as a “youth problem,” rather than examining the complex issues





surrounding bullying through larger institutional, cultural and societal influences that affect young peoples' development.

Young people need to feel a sense of connection and belonging and establish positive bonds with peers, families, schools and communities (Henderson, 2007). They are not “the future.” They are the *present* – and they long to be engaged in meaningful ways around important issues that affect their lives. The contributions they make enhance their own development – and their engagement is essential if we want to make significant positive changes around issues like bullying in our communities (Pitman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem & Ferber, 2003). Be SAFE taps the wisdom, strengths and resiliency of young people and draws them into a process of learning, growth and change – alongside and in partnership with adults.

Be SAFE Explores the Complexities of the Issues

One of the unique features of Be SAFE is that it encourages us to examine the complex issue of bullying through a variety of lenses and levels. Too many approaches to bullying scapegoat or blame youth by focusing only on peer aggression and peer abuse without focusing on the behavior of adults – and by ignoring the larger institutional and cultural influences that contribute to the reasons why bullying, bias and harassment are such serious issues in communities. Be SAFE encourages us to step back and take a broader view and to develop a critical consciousness and lens through which to examine these complex issues.

Be SAFE Is About Social & Emotional Learning & Health

A growing body of reliable, scientific research shows the benefits of social and emotional learning for both youth and adults. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), efforts that promote social and emotional learning improve young people's academic success and overall health and well-being. These efforts also help reduce negative behaviors such as alcohol and drug use, violence and bullying. In short, helping children master their emotions and relationships makes them better learners (CASEL, 2012).

Social and emotional competencies – including self-awareness, ability to manage distressing emotions, sensitivity to how others feel and the ability to effectively manage relationships – are vital throughout our lives, and the foundations for these important



life skills begin in childhood. People who bully others may lack the social skills of empathy, self-control, sharing, listening and negotiating that are part of healthy relationships. Be SAFE draws from the research on social-emotional learning and integrates it throughout the curriculum. It also provides specific content focuses that invite youth and adults to explore the areas of emotional and social intelligence more deeply.

Be SAFE Shines a Light on Shame

According to researcher, educator and author, Brené Brown, a core emotion that is linked to issues of bullying is shame. Shame is universal and something we all experience, and yet we rarely, if ever, talk about it. The silence around shame helps it flourish and allows it to be used as a weapon to hurt ourselves and others (Brown, 2012). When young people (and adults) are targets of hurtful, cruel, bullying behaviors it often triggers feelings of worthlessness, inadequacy and shame. Interestingly, it's not just the targets or victims of bullying who experience these painful feelings. The person doing the bullying is likely to be acting aggressively to cover up similar feelings harbored within himself or herself.

Shame is connected to the intensely painful experience of believing that we are flawed and unworthy of love, acceptance and belonging. These feelings often lead to fear, blame, disconnection and isolation. When we unconsciously feel shame, we may respond by shutting down, acting out or attacking others. Shame diminishes our capacity to feel empathy – and it is empathy that opens our minds and hearts to the kind of courage, connection and compassion required to address issues of bullying in meaningful ways.

You will notice that issues of shame are addressed throughout the Be SAFE curriculum. Young people and adults are encouraged to:

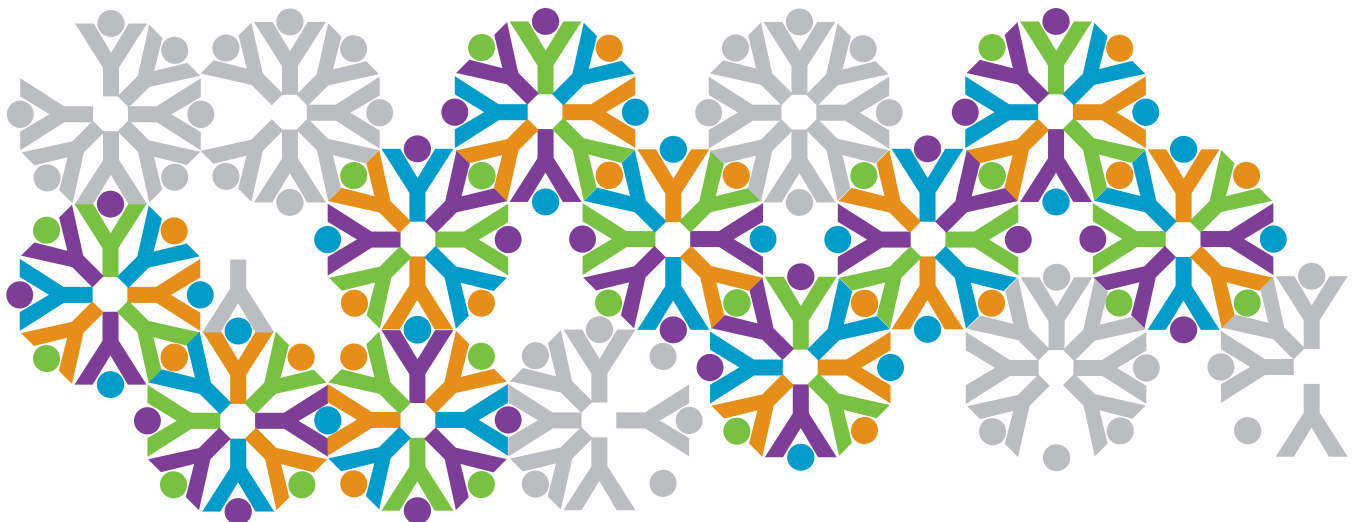
- ▶ Talk openly about their experiences within a safe and caring environment.
- ▶ Develop critical awareness about the issues.
- ▶ Be vulnerable and courageous as they explore ways to address bullying in their lives.





Be SAFE Distinguishes Between Bullying & Harassment

When young people are asked to list the kinds of things that people are bullied for, they often mention characteristics connected to race, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation (real or perceived), disabilities and other aspects of human differences. Hurtful language and behaviors that continually target people based on these human differences and that create a hostile environment for people connected to those groups are called “harassment.” Too many approaches to bullying either minimize or ignore these important connections to differences – or they go to the other extreme and label as “bullying” what could more accurately be identified as illegal **civil rights violations** and even **hate crimes**. Be SAFE invites young people and adults into important conversations about the differences between bullying, bias and harassment, and provides opportunities to learn about human differences in healthy ways.





The Be SAFE Focus Areas





OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 1:

Creating a SAFE Space

Research shows that young people benefit from time spent in positive and safe settings with adults and peers (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). But these kinds of settings don't just happen. Creating positive environments requires intentional time in order to foster settings that are physically, verbally and emotionally safe for all youth (and adults). As the adult working with young people, you have an important role to play in helping to set a tone that encourages a caring, nonjudgmental and safe environment (Tucker, 2011). Activities in this section are designed to introduce Be SAFE to your group, help them get to know each other better, build a sense of connection and belonging, and create guidelines to establish group norms and expectations. Guidelines (created along with youth) help to create an environment that fosters the development of healthy relationships.

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 2:

Exploring Bullying

Every day across our communities, thousands of young people are affected by a range of harmful bullying behaviors (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012; Wang, Ionotti, & Nansel, 2009). Building an understanding of what bullying is – including the various kinds of bullying taking place in our lives – is an important initial step in interrupting and preventing these behaviors. The activities in this section are designed to help your group explore examples of the kinds of bullying behaviors they see around them and how these can affect all of us, including those being targeted, those carrying out negative behaviors and those who are witnesses. Your group can also do some important reflection about how our own and others' attitudes and beliefs influence our roles within these kinds of situations – reflection that is a critical aspect of preventing these negative behaviors (Espalage, Green, & Polanin, 2011).

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 3:

Addressing Cyberbullying & Cyber Safety

Technology plays a powerful role in connecting young people in positive ways – and it can also be used to carry out hurtful and unsafe online behaviors. Twenty percent of 11- to 18-year-olds have indicated that they've been cyberbullied at some point in their lives, with 20 percent also admitting to cyberbullying others (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). To prevent the serious outcomes that can result from these behaviors, it's important to explore these kinds of outcomes as well as our responsibility to work together to respond to cyberbullying (Hertz & David-Ferdon, 2008). Activities in this focus area help your group reflect on the role of technology in our lives and ways that cyberbullying can affect both those directly involved and those witnessing it virtually. Your group can also identify and practice a menu of strategies for responding to these kinds of situations, which is essential learning for making a difference in our own and others' behaviors (Haber, 2011).

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 4:

Understanding Differences

When young people are asked to list the kinds of things that people are bullied for, they often mention characteristics connected to race, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation (real or perceived), disabilities and other aspects of human differences (Davis & Nixon, 2010; Garbarino & deLara, 2002; Goldman, 2012; Guerra, Williamson, & Sadek, 2012). Activities in this focus area will help you talk about differences with your group and help them understand the importance of recognizing, understanding and appreciating differences in themselves and in others – a life skill that will serve them well now and in the future. Information is also provided to help youth and adults understand the connections and differences between bullying behaviors and illegal forms of harassment.



OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 5:

Nurturing Our Emotional Intelligence

Many studies show the importance of developing emotional intelligence – for children, youth and adults (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2012; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011; Goleman, 1995 & 2006; Lantieri & Goleman, 2008; Saarni, Campos, Camras & Witherington, 2008). Emotional intelligence includes developing self-awareness and an increased ability to notice and navigate our thoughts and emotions – particularly when we’re experiencing stress. Tapping our resiliency – the innate ability we all have to gently self-correct and thrive in the face of change and challenges – is an important life skill for children, youth and adults (Lantieri & Goleman, 2008; Benard, 2004). The activities in this section will help you develop greater self-awareness of your own state of mind and emotional life so that you can share this understanding with the young people with whom you work.

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 7:

Moving From Bystanders to Allies

Settings where bullying behaviors occur (whether the behaviors happen face-to-face or virtually) nearly always involve a larger group of bystanders (Obermann, 2011; Pepler, Craig, & O’Connell, 2010). An important aspect of creating positive change involves helping kids and adults move from being passive bystanders to being powerful allies – that is, people who use their voices in powerful ways to interrupt hurtful behaviors, to support those being targeted, or to do both. The activities in this section focus on elements that are important for this transformation: Knowing what influences our willingness to act during these situations, and identifying and practicing specific skills for being an ally (Espelage, Green, & Polanin, 2011). The activities also help group members examine different meanings of courage and their own potential for everyday acts of courage and support.

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 6:

Developing Our Social Intelligence

This section focuses on developing social intelligence, which is connected in many ways to emotional intelligence. For example, research shows that children who are well-liked by their peers are better able to express their emotions in appropriate ways and are better able to manage their own negative emotions such as anger, nervousness and sadness (Terzian, 2012). While emotional intelligence is about developing self-awareness and an increased ability to notice and navigate thoughts and emotions, social intelligence focuses on our sensitivity to how others feel and on our capacity to nurture and navigate relationships (Goleman, 2006). Activities in this section focus on helping participants understand the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships, reflect on the qualities we want in our own relationships, develop listening skills and learn about the concept of separate realities – all important aspects of social intelligence.

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 8:

Keeping Ourselves Safe

This section focuses on those most affected – the victim or target of hurtful language and bullying behaviors. While anyone can be a target, those most at risk for becoming victims of bullying include those who are passive, isolated or who appear weak, those who have low self-confidence and those who don’t fit in because of a difference (Davis & Nixon, 2010 & 2011; GLSEN, 2012; Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012; Garbarino & deLara, 2002; Goldman, 2012; Guerra, Williamson, & Sadek, 2012; Storey & Slaby, 2008). The activities in this section focus on taking power away from the person engaging in bullying behaviors by helping those targeted feel empowered, confident and prepared to respond to bullying when it happens. Activities include creating a safety plan, responding assertively rather than aggressively, and practicing mindfulness to help stay psychologically and emotionally safe in the face of bullying and other challenging situations.



OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 9:

Becoming Critical Consumers of Media

From the moment we're born, the media and advertising messages that surround us provide a toolkit for building our understanding about the world (Brown, Schaffer, Vargas, & Romocki, 2004). These messages influence how we view ourselves and others and can contribute to unhealthy self-images, stereotypes about groups of people, and relationships in which bullying and aggression are considered "normal." Many scholars stress that while we can't turn off this media world, we have a responsibility to help young people (and adults) learn to read it well (Brown & Bobkowski, 2011; Brown, Lamb, & Tappan, 2009; Lamb & Brown, 2006). The activities in this section will help your group explore what's underneath these messages and ways they can influence our beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviors. The activities also help group members identify and practice strategies for becoming critical media consumers and advocates for change.

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 10:

Reflecting on Our Be SAFE Experiences

Providing intentional time for reflection about a group's Be SAFE learning experiences allows kids and adults to examine changes in awareness, feelings, attitudes, knowledge and actions – including how we treat ourselves and our friends, peers, families and others. The activities in this focus area provide structured time for both group reflection and individual reflection through the "Be SAFE Survey" (see the "Assessing Changes in Your Group" section for more information). The group will celebrate what they've learned and contributed to the Be SAFE experiences, as well as explore ways to share their knowledge, wisdom and skills with others in their community.





Be SAFE Scope & Sequence

	Focus Area 1: Creating a SAFE Space	Focus Area 2: Exploring Bullying	Focus Area 3: Addressing Cyberbullying and Cyber Safety	Focus Area 4: Understanding Differences
Essential Activities	Creating Guidelines for Our Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe what Be SAFE is. Identify settings and environments that young people are involved with. Describe the concepts of <i>safe</i>, <i>affirming</i> and <i>fair</i> as they are used in this program. Discuss the importance of and follow the group's guidelines for how the group members will treat each other. 	What Makes Bullying Real for You? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify types and examples of bullying behaviors. Explain ways that bullying behaviors can affect the people involved. Share a definition of bullying. 	And Words (and Images) Can Hurt Forever <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify different kinds of cyberbullying behaviors. Explain how cyberbullying behaviors can affect the people involved. 	What's the Difference? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate increased awareness about human differences and connections to bullying behaviors. Describe why people may target others based on differences. Describe ways that bullying is different from illegal forms of harassment.
Going Deeper Activities	What's in a Name? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share the importance of their names to their identities. Discuss ways that people's names have cultural significance to them. 	Exploring Spheres of Influence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express their beliefs about how people should be treated. Explains ways that other people can influence these beliefs. Make connections between their beliefs and their reactions to bullying situations. 	Taking Action to Stop Cyberbullying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express positive and safe ways to interrupt cyberbullying. 	Who Am I? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe <i>being</i> and <i>doing</i> aspects of who they are. Explain the importance of recognizing, understanding and appreciating differences in themselves and others.
Extending Our Learning Activities	Creating Personal Respect Posters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain what <i>respect</i> means to them. Discuss why the notion of respect means different things to different people. Explain that respect can have different meanings across cultural groups. Talk about how the concept of respect applies to ways that the group members want to treat each other. 	Gathering the Perspectives of Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate increased awareness about the bullying experiences and perspectives of others (including youth and adults). Share with others how the group is using Be SAFE to build a setting that is physically and emotionally safe. 	Steps to Cyber Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe ways to stay safe online. 	Take a Stand! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain why it's important to engage in dialogue around complex issues such as bullying and human differences. Demonstrate skills in engaging in dialogue around complex issues.



Be SAFE Scope & Sequence, continued

	Focus Area 5: Nurturing Our Emotional Intelligence	Focus Area 6: Developing Our Social Intelligence	Focus Area 7: Moving From Bystanders to Allies	Focus Area 8: Keeping Ourselves Safe
Essential Activities	Clear Mind – Mud Mind: Understanding State of Mind <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the concept of <i>state of mind</i> and how it affects their thinking and perceptions. Identify how their thoughts can create their experiences from moment to moment. Discuss the concept of <i>personal accountability</i> related to their thoughts, feelings and actions. Use a “mud mind jar” as a reminder about the concept of state of mind. 	The Relationships Continuum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define several qualities of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Describe the continuum of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Identify ways to nurture healthy relationships and navigate unhealthy relationships. Apply the relationship continuum to their relationships with others. 	Moving to Circles of Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List several reasons why people don’t try to interrupt bullying behaviors. Explain differences between being a silent bystander and being a supportive ally. Identify some strategies for moving from being bystanders to allies. 	Creating a Safety Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ways to respond in situations when they are feeling unsafe. Discuss the importance of safety planning.
Going Deeper Activities	Creating Space for Feelings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name six core feelings: mad, sad, scared, peaceful, powerful and joyful, and ways they express them. Describe how people learn about feelings in different ways. Practice noticing and naming their feelings. 	The Art of Listening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the importance of listening in creating connections, understanding and rapport with people. Identify listening skills and consider their cross-cultural implications. Practice listening to and being heard by others. Share feedback with each other on their listening skills. 	Speaking Up and Standing With: Skills for Being an Ally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate skills for being an ally to people who are bullied. Demonstrate ways to help those who are bullying others. 	Standing Up: Assertive Versus Aggressive Responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the difference between assertive and aggressive responses. Demonstrate their skills in responding assertively as the target in bullying scenarios.
Extending Our Learning Activities	The Mood Elevator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the impact that mood has on thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Recognize and discuss the temporary and shifting nature of moods and be aware of different mood states. Increase their ability to <i>not</i> participate in “low mood behavior.” 	Exploring Separate Realities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the concept of <i>separate realities</i>. Discuss how every person sees words, images and situations through his or her own unique perspective or lens. Honor their own realities while also being open to the realities and experiences of others. 	Contributing to the Circle of Courage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss different meanings of <i>courage</i>. Share examples of courage in ourselves and others. 	Everyday Mindfulness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the concept of <i>mindfulness</i>. Demonstrate their skills in practicing everyday mindfulness.



	Focus Area 9: Becoming Critical Consumers of Media	Focus Area 10: Reflecting on Our Be SAFE Experiences
Essential Activities	Seeing Is Believing – or Is It? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the word <i>stereotypes</i>. Describe ways that media images and messages may reinforce gender stereotypes. Describe ways that negative and positive images and messages can influence our beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviors – including bullying behaviors. Begin to identify ways to critically evaluate media messages. 	Celebrating Our Be SAFE Experiences! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe changes in their awareness, feelings, attitudes, knowledge and actions as a result of their Be SAFE experiences.
Going Deeper Activities	Wake Up and Smell the Messages! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the wide range of sources around us that convey messages and information. Discuss ways we consciously and unconsciously take in media messages and how they can affect our feelings, thoughts and behaviors – including bullying behaviors. Identify ways to critically evaluate media messages. 	Sharing and Celebrating With Our Important Circles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share information about the Be SAFE focus areas with other people (such as family members, friends, teachers and other community members).
Extending Our Learning Activities	And the Beat Goes On – How Does Music Move You? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the power of music – how it makes us feel about ourselves, other people and issues of importance in our lives. 	Passing It Forward – Opportunities for Educating Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach other groups information from the Be SAFE focus areas. Recognize themselves as community leaders around critical issues.





Using the Be SAFE Core Curriculum

The Be SAFE Content & Learning Design

Each of the 10 focus areas of Be SAFE includes three engaging activities focused on fostering environments that are physically and emotionally safe. The first activity in each focus area is called the “Essential Activity” because it provides the minimum “dose” or experience recommended for using Be SAFE with your group. Each focus area also includes additional activities called “Going Deeper” and “Extending Our Learning.” These two additional activities in each section are for those of you who want to work more intentionally with your group over time to deepen and extend the learning and impacts of Be SAFE. (The “Be SAFE Scope and Sequence” chart provides a snapshot of the activities included for all 10 focus areas, along with the learning outcomes for each activity.)

The focus areas also include additional information such as resources that can support your group’s learning, ways to connect with families, suggestions of ways to deepen your own and the group’s learning, and specific recommendations from groups that have used Be SAFE. “Ways to Learn More,” “Try This, Too!” and additional resources are provided to support the learning of both youth and adults involved with Be SAFE.

While this guide is divided into 10 key focus areas, each of these sections is part of a larger process that makes up the whole of Be SAFE. This overall learning process and design incorporates practices recommended by CASEL for promoting personal and social skill development in adolescents. CASEL has found that effective out-of-school time programs include components that are sequenced, active, focused and explicit (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). You are encouraged to use the materials sequentially – in the order in which they

are provided. Be SAFE is a series and each activity builds on the one before it.

As you read through the materials and become more acquainted with Be SAFE, it may be helpful to see this process of learning as a journey. You and the young people with whom you work are on a path of growth, learning and change together, with each focus area providing important steps in that process. You’ll notice a graphic image throughout the materials that is there to remind us of the whole journey of Be SAFE – as it also indicates where you’re at within the larger learning process.

Because Be SAFE is designed to be used within a variety of youth settings, it’s important that you decide what makes the most sense for your group in terms of meeting frequency. Within groups that meet daily (such as after-school programs), it may make sense to focus on Be SAFE once or twice a week as you work through the sequence of activities. For groups that meet less frequently (such as a 4-H club or Scout troop), it may make sense to build Be SAFE activities into every meeting time. For short-term groups (such as a summer camp), it may make sense to include Be SAFE as part of daily activities.

Adding Value to the Be SAFE Curriculum Experience

Here are several suggestions that can strengthen and add value to the Be SAFE experience:

- ▶ Read through the whole curriculum first before beginning to use it with young people. This will give you the opportunity to see the whole of Be SAFE and how all the parts fit together to provide a powerful set of learning experiences for youth and adults. It will also provide valuable information and tips about navigating strong emotions that may come up for participants and



ways to strengthen relationships within your group as you begin your journey through Be SAFE.

- ▶ When possible, plan to cofacilitate Be SAFE activities with another adult or an older teen leader. Providing different perspectives along the way can add much value to the experience for everyone.
- ▶ You are encouraged to go beyond just the Essential Activity in each focus area. In most sections, the Essential Activity provides an opportunity to explore foundational information with young people that sets the stage for deeper learning around the issues in that focus area. Some Going Deeper activities provide opportunities to practice skills. Be sure to do the Essential Activity before moving to action and practice through the Going Deeper and Extending Our Learning activities.
- ▶ If time allows, start each Be SAFE session with a short check-in. Bring the group together and ask how they're doing with the process and if they've had any thoughts, ideas or insights since your last Be SAFE session. This can help the group reconnect with what they learned through the last session and provides the opportunity for the group to hear their wisdom and experiences before moving into the next Be SAFE activity.
- ▶ Each Be SAFE activity reminds you to repost the guidelines that the group will have created in the first session. In addition to simply posting the guidelines, you can also revisit them regularly by asking the group what seems to be working and where everyone needs to try to do a better job. Do additional guidelines need to be added to include the thoughts and ideas of new group members? Think of the guidelines as a "living document" that are essential to creating an environment that feels safe, affirming and fair for everyone.
- ▶ If you're using Be SAFE in an after-school program, consider doing an active icebreaker or

activity first before jumping into the Be SAFE curriculum. Kids may need time to release some energy before settling in to learn more about issues of bullying in their lives.

- ▶ Several of the activities in Be SAFE invite participants into a process of self-reflection. If time allows and it fits within your setting, consider asking young people to keep a journal or do some self-reflective writing about what they're learning and what's coming up for them. Distributing folders in which they can store their writings and Be SAFE handouts may be helpful to keep things together.
- ▶ Don't underestimate the importance of building trust with your group. Take the time to honor the process of building trust and strengthening relationships within your group. While the content, definitions and skill development provided through the Be SAFE activities are important, the process or ways you go about tending to the group are extremely important as well. Powerful learning environments focused on complex issues such as bullying honor both content and process.
- ▶ Don't box kids in and assume they won't take the issues seriously. Our own stereotypes of youth and rigid rules about gender often get in the way of our work with young people. Have high expectations for the group and encourage both boys and girls to be vulnerable, take risks and explore their emotional and social lives.
Their overall health and well-being and the health of their current and future relationships are on the line. It's that important.
- ▶ In Focus Area 5: Nurturing Our Emotional Intelligence, the Going Deeper Activity includes exploring six core feelings (mad, sad, scared, peaceful, powerful and joyful) and the importance of noticing and naming these feelings when they come up for us. You may find it helpful to post the feelings on flipchart paper and encourage participants to regularly use the



language of the six core feelings as they explore subsequent focus areas of Be SAFE.

- ▶ Throughout the focus areas, the group has opportunities to create different kinds of visuals related to what they're exploring. If possible, keep these and display them in your meeting space along the Be SAFE journey. These kinds of visuals can serve as powerful reminders of what the group has explored, which can be especially helpful during Focus Area 10: Reflecting on Our Be SAFE Experiences, when the group does some intentional reflection about their Be SAFE experiences.

Ideas for Grouping Participants

Many of the Be SAFE activities call for your participants to work in pairs or small groups. Providing young people – and adults – with opportunities to work more closely with others is an important aspect of building and deepening relationships, especially when these kinds of groupings are done with care. When you divide participants into pairs or small groups, try to create groupings that reflect the group's diversity, including gender, race, ethnicity, disabilities, personalities, class and other differences. Take care to avoid groupings that “pit” one group against another (such as boys versus girls or sixth graders versus seventh graders), and look for opportunities and ways to support kids who may experience things like challenges with impulse control or a tendency to withdraw. When it makes sense to create “random” groups, use techniques such as counting off by numbers (using whatever number of groups you want), using people's birthday months to create groups or having them line up alphabetically by first names then having them form the A-E group, F-J group and so on.

As your group continues to build relationships over time, be sure the composition of pairs and small groups changes so that kids and adults are deepening their knowledge about and relationships with different members of the group. While

the goal of Be SAFE is not to force participants to find ways to be best friends with everyone in the group, it is important to build relationships that foster caring, trust and respect. And when you see this happening for those in your group, take a moment after the gathering to provide one-on-one feedback to those who are modeling these important relationship qualities.

Tips for Using Scenarios & Role-Plays

Some of the Be SAFE activities involve the group in creating responses to scenarios – both scenarios that are provided within an activity and scenarios the group may come up with. As you use these kinds of activities, always keep in mind that the situations being portrayed might trigger powerful feelings for some in the group who may have been targeted by the kinds of behaviors portrayed or who may be carrying out these kinds of behaviors. Pay close attention to how group members are reacting to these scenarios and whether they might need additional support (see “Supporting Group Members” in this section for more information).

Providing kids (and adults) with opportunities to practice skills for using their voices in positive and powerful ways to respond to hurtful situations is an important aspect of Be SAFE. During this process, focus on the potential responses and avoid having the group act out or practice hurtful behaviors. Read the scenario out loud to the group (or have a group member read it) and then have the group members describe or role-play their responses. Help the group members keep their responses short and focused on the skills, and end when the skills have been demonstrated. If you feel like a response is getting off track, don't be afraid to step in and offer some coaching. When small groups share responses to different situations, have the total group share their feedback and provide appreciation to the groups for their work.



Understanding Your Role

“Doing Our Own Work”

Be SAFE invites young people and adults into a journey together – one that encourages us to examine our thoughts, feelings, values, beliefs and behaviors. Many experts in the areas of social-emotional health, bullying prevention and related areas agree that adults must be willing to dig deep and do their own hard emotional work in order to facilitate these kinds of programs effectively with others. It’s not necessary to be a mental health professional to lead Be SAFE. However, it is essential for adults who want to work with youth around these issues to begin by engaging in a process of “doing our own work.” This involves being willing to self-focus and be reflective about our own histories, perspectives and realities.

Many of the activities in Be SAFE encourage the adult who is leading the session to model the activity for youth by sharing examples of their own ideas, experiences, identities, cultural backgrounds and other aspects of themselves. This kind of reflection is vital so that we are better positioned to create and present powerful and effective learning opportunities for and with youth. When adults are willing to do their own work and share as openly as they can with youth, they show young people that it’s okay to talk about these issues and that we’re all in a process of learning, growing and healing. This can help build trust as you model your willingness to be authentic and share your own stories, questions and struggles. By doing so, we model what we hope others will do – and we cast ourselves in the role of colearner rather than as experts or specialists.

Young people may be reluctant to share their stories because they feel their situation is unique or shameful. When we as adults are willing to be vulnerable and share our own stories about our experiences with challenging situations like bullying, we show young people that there’s nothing to be ashamed of. We show them that we can have empathy and understanding for their situations and that we want to listen and be supportive.





What You Model Counts

When working with young people to create safe, affirming and fair environments, it's important that adults not scapegoat kids around issues of bullying *and* that they take a close look at what they may be modeling themselves. Use the following table (Starr, n.d.) to gauge what you might be modeling as you work with your group.

Adults Who Bully . . .	Caring Adults . . .
Create their own rules for behaviors within a setting, often with different standards for the adults in the setting.	Work with youth and other adults to create guidelines for behaviors that contribute to a safe, affirming and fair setting.
Take an iron fist approach that often reflects inconsistent use of the rules.	Bring the guidelines to life by helping the group (including the adults) clearly and consistently follow them.
Exert their own control, sometimes resorting to anger and intimidation.	Model self-control and choose their words and actions carefully.
Use sarcasm to target specific youth and divide the group.	Use humor to bring the group together.
Target or humiliate young people for being unsuccessful or different.	Help young people feel successful, included and valued.
Compare youth to one another.	See each young person's uniqueness.
Make public examples of poor behavior.	Highlight caring and positive behavior and follow up in private with youth who need additional support and guidance.
Are judgmental.	Are judicious.
Let youth know who's boss.	Let youth know they care.



Adapted from "Are You a Bully? Don't Accidentally Bully Your Students" by Linda Starr (n.d.), EducationWorld.com, retrieved from http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/columnists/starr_points/starr027.shtml.



Working in Partnership With Youth

Develop Youth-Adult Partnerships to Address Bullying

Research shows that when young people have strong connections and relationships with adults they are more resilient (Davis & Nixon, 2011). Be SAFE encourages adults to build relationships and to work in partnership with youth to create safe, affirming and fair environments. This involves moving away from the notion that adults have all the answers or that they need to teach to young people and be in control of youth. Working in partnership with youth includes seeing the assets, strengths and wisdom that both youth *and* adults bring into the setting. It recognizes that youth are experts on their own realities and honors their perspectives and ideas. Programs and efforts are developed *with* youth rather than *to* or *for* them. Youth and adults are seen as colearners and coteachers – each being open to what they can learn from each other.



Youth-adult partnerships involve multiple youth with multiple adults working together to address issues that are important to the overall health of people, groups and communities. Part of this is stimulating young people to develop social responsibility – a crucial factor in the promotion of health and well-being. Research on youth-adult partnerships shows that not only do youth benefit from these kinds of partnerships – adults, organizations and communities benefit as well (Zeldin, Larson, & Camino, 2005; Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2012).

Bullying prevention and education efforts are particularly suited to youth-adult partnerships. Young people often know more about what's really happening around these issues because they are the ones most affected by mean-spirited, hurtful language and behaviors and the climate of fear that is created when bullying, bias and harassment go unaddressed.

Rather than relying on stereotypes of young people, labeling them as bullies or victims, and trying to control their behaviors, adults can strengthen their antibullying efforts by tapping the assets, strengths and wisdom of young people. Adults are encouraged to work in sustained partnerships with young people to address the complex issue of bullying – and to create settings that are safe, affirming and fair for all youth and adults. The activities within this guide invite adults to focus on building trust with youth with whom they work



and to share power and decision-making with young people when appropriate. Whenever you can, consider ways to involve youth (or older teens) as cocreators and cofacilitators of Be SAFE – and explore ways that youth and adults can work together for positive change around these issues.

Adultism: A Barrier to Youth-Adult Partnerships

Too many antibullying efforts are adult-driven and grounded in *adultism*. According to John Bell (1995) of YouthBuild USA, adultism is reflected in stereotypes and negative attitudes of youth that are based on the assumption that adults are better than young people, and that adults are entitled to act upon youth without their agreement. Adultism is a form of social control and is reinforced by many institutions (including schools and families) through laws, customs, policies, programs and practices. While youth definitely need healthy supports and guidance from adults, adultism disempowers youth. Young people consistently report that the messages they get from the adult world are that they are not as important, are not taken seriously, and that they have little to no power.

A powerful strategy for addressing adultism and creating healthier relationships and communities is the development of youth-adult partnerships. More than tokenism or involving one or two young people on a board or committee, youth-adult partnerships involve youth in significant, authentic and meaningful ways. Issues of trust, power and authority are addressed, and youth and adults are expected to learn from each other.

Involving Teens as Leaders

One way to model youth and adult partnerships is to involve older teens as coleaders of your Be SAFE efforts. It's likely that teens are much more knowledgeable than adults about the presence and effects of bullying behaviors within the lives of kids. It's also likely that the youth within your Be SAFE group will appreciate and look up to older teens as role models around these kinds of issues.

Work *with* teens in authentic and meaningful ways that tap their wisdom, knowledge, abilities and skills. Involve them as cocreators, coplanners, cofacilitators and colearners in ways that account for their “place of readiness” and that avoid adultism. Offer teens opportunities to develop and practice skills that will serve their own positive development as well as contribute to the overall development of your group.





Know Your Audience

Be SAFE is designed primarily for early adolescents – kids aged 11 to 14. While the reality is that many out-of-school youth settings involve kids who are older and younger than that, it's important to keep in mind that Be SAFE intentionally focuses on the experiences and developmental needs of early adolescents.



What's Going on Developmentally?

The development stage of early adolescence involves lots of changes for kids, and Be SAFE offers opportunities to focus on where kids this age are cognitively, physically, emotionally and socially. Following are a few characteristics of this stage of development, along with strategies to keep in mind for working with your group.

Developmental Characteristics

Early adolescents tend to share the following range of developmental characteristics:

- ▶ Experience a growth spurt that occurs across the range of ages, with girls generally maturing before boys.
- ▶ May be uncomfortable with their body image due to their rapid changes in appearance and may experience challenges to their self-concept.
- ▶ May experience a roller coaster of emotions.
- ▶ Are moving from concrete to abstract thinking.
- ▶ Can set short-term goals, generate options and predict outcomes.
- ▶ Tend to reject ready-made solutions from adults in favor of their own.
- ▶ Regard justice and equality as important issues – and they want to be part of something important.
- ▶ Are moving away from dependence on parents or guardians.
- ▶ Are shifting from dependence on opinions of adults to dependence on opinions of peers.
- ▶ Role models are often adult public figures.
- ▶ Are learning more about their potential roles within romantic relationships.

Strategies

Keep the following strategies in mind when working with early adolescents:

- ▶ Listen to their fears and worries about their development without judging or trivializing. Provide honest responses.
- ▶ Involve them in planning what the group will do.
- ▶ Provide opportunities to question ways of doing things.
- ▶ Ask questions to encourage predicting and problem-solving (such as “What if this doesn’t work?” and “What could happen if we did this?”).
- ▶ Involve them in finding solutions to issues that arise in the group.
- ▶ Talk with them about public figures they admire.
- ▶ Provide opportunities to interact with all members of the group.
- ▶ Provide the option to choose when and if they will be “on stage.”
- ▶ Avoid singling individuals out in front of others for either compliments or criticism.
- ▶ Provide lots of opportunities for dialogue and discussion.



Involving Younger & Older Youth

As mentioned previously, it's not uncommon for out-of-school time youth settings to involve kids of a wide range of ages. If your Be SAFE group involves younger kids, keep in mind that they are more concrete in their thinking and are at a different place in their social and emotional development than early adolescents are. You may need to adapt some of the language in the curriculum to help them better understand the issues. Also keep in mind that when they share their experiences related to bullying and relationships, their examples might sound very different from those of 11- to 14-year-olds.

Similarly, older youth – given their stage of development – may share experiences and examples about the issues that are somewhat different from those of early adolescents. Older adolescents may also be more actively exploring issues related to different aspects of their identities – aspects related to gender, culture, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, appearance and more – that are very connected with issues explored within Be SAFE. Be sensitive to the kinds of discussion that can come out of their experiences, which may be very different from the discussions of younger aged groups.

If you have older youth who are in a place of readiness and who are interested a deeper involvement around the Be SAFE issues, look for ways to tap their skills and knowledge in leadership roles. Refer to the “Involving Teens as Leaders” section for more information.





Supporting Group Members

Supporting Those Who Experience – or Carry Out – Bullying Behaviors

It's very possible that you'll learn that there are young people in your group who are currently being targeted by hurtful bullying behaviors. This could be happening within your group's setting, in other settings or online. In findings from the national Youth Voice Project survey, young people in grades 6 to 8 who had been targeted shared the kinds of adult responses that were most helpful to them (Davis & Nixon, 2010). These included listening to them, giving them advice, checking in with them over time to see if things were getting better, and providing increased supervision in places where they were at risk.

They also identified less helpful and least helpful adult responses, with the latter including ignoring the situation, telling youth they should have acted differently, telling them to solve it themselves and telling them to stop tattling. As you work with your Be SAFE group, take the findings of this survey to heart and use them with those who are experiencing hurtful behaviors.

There may be youth in your group who are targets of bullying because they're emotionally reactive – that is, they produce the kinds of strong emotional responses that those doing the bullying are looking for. Some kids may lack the skills needed for getting positive and healthy attention from their peers and may end up being targeted instead. These young people may need extra support and comfort from you and other adults in order to help them build connection and confidence. Some may also need more in-depth kinds of assistance through other support systems (see the following section for more information about seeking this kind of support). **No matter what's going on for someone who's being targeted, it's**

always critical to stress within your own thinking and in discussions with your group that no one ever deserves to be the target of hurtful behaviors.

There may also be kids in your group who are carrying out bullying behaviors, including some who may both carry out and be targets of hurtful behaviors. It's helpful to get beneath the surface of these behaviors to find out what else might be going on and whether these behaviors are a reflection of some deeper issues and concerns. (As stressed previously, the following section can provide information about additional kinds of support that might be needed.)

Young people (and adults) who are carrying out bullying behaviors can benefit from the clear and concrete guidelines of your setting – especially when they've had the opportunity to contribute to the development of these guidelines. Also, don't underestimate the value of providing these young people with an unconditional and positive connection with at least one significant adult. It's also important to encourage their full involvement in the Be SAFE activities so they can learn with and from caring peers and adults about group beliefs and norms related to positive and negative behaviors. The Be SAFE activities will also help young people (and adults) examine how their own bias and stereotyping may be reflected in their negative actions.

When Youth Need Additional Support – in the Moment & Beyond

All the people in your group – young people and adults – come into the setting with a wide variety of positive and negative life experiences. Considering people's experiences is especially important when exploring issues that are connected



to the core of people's identities, health and well-being. Talking about bullying situations and the effects of these behaviors can produce trauma responses for some people – whether they've been involved in bullying situations as a target, as the person doing the bullying or as a witness. (Keep in mind that trauma responses could be connected with other situations kids have experienced or are experiencing, such as physical or sexual abuse, neglect, the death or loss of a loved one, the illness of a caregiver, witnessing domestic violence, natural disasters, and living in chronically chaotic and stressful environments.)

Pay close attention to how your group members are reacting to these conversations (their body language, their words and vocal tone, the examples they share, if they disconnect from the conversation, and so on). Decide whether it's important to provide additional support in the moment, after the group meeting or both. It's important to provide activities, conversations and space for kids and adults that invite them to share a full range of feelings and emotions, so be careful not to cut off times when this sharing is happening in safe and supportive ways. And – if you do have a group member who is experiencing a high level of distress – it may be helpful to take a break so that you can provide some immediate one-on-one support for the young person. If this is necessary, make sure that you touch base with the whole group afterward to share your concern about what's going on (without breaching confidentiality) and to provide an opportunity for empathy building within the group.

Other times, it may be more appropriate to follow up with the young person after the meeting. Gently share what you noticed about their reactions and responses to the group conversation, and offer an open heart and a willingness to hear and believe what they want to share. Keep in mind that often the most meaningful assistance that a trusted adult can provide is a safe and comfortable

space where kids can talk about what's going on. Ask if there are ways you can be helpful and ask whether others (such as their parents) are aware of what's going on. Respect their need for confidentiality *and* balance this with concern about their safety and immediate risks.

There may be situations where you'll decide that additional action and support is needed. Depending on the situation and your relationship with a young person's parents or caregivers, you may decide to follow up with them as a starting point. It may also be important to check with the staff or leadership connected to your organization, school or group to learn the protocol for getting help for those who need it. Psychologists, school counselors, social workers, physicians and others can also be resources for helping young people and their families. You can also learn more from resources like the *Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators*, available through the National Child Traumatic Stress Network at www.nctsnet.org.

Dealing With Disclosures

As mentioned earlier, when young people disclose that they're involved in a harmful situation, it's important to think about your best plan of response. This is true for situations where someone in your group may be at risk *and* those situations that your group members disclose about others within the community. In all cases, take these disclosures seriously, and check with the staff or leadership connected to your organization, school or group to learn the protocol for following up.



Reaching Beyond Your Setting

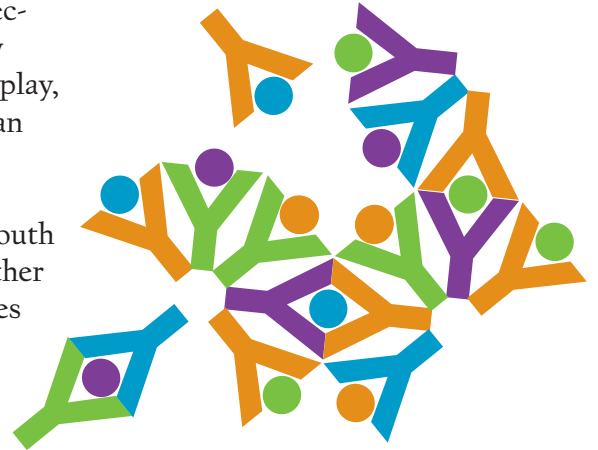
Using the Be SAFE curriculum within your setting can provide opportunities for the learning and growth of your group members, for building stronger relationships and for strengthening the overall climate of your setting. Keep in mind that opportunities for this work don't end within the walls of your setting – look for connections that can help young people feel physically and emotionally safe across all of the community settings where they learn, live, play, work and grow. Across these settings, kids (as well as adults) can benefit from consistent and redundant messages that reflect the importance of belonging, caring, compassion, fairness, trust, responsibility, resilience, justice and courage. Families, schools, youth and family agencies, and recreational, sports, faith-based and other youth organizations are urged to work together to create climates across these settings that are grounded in these messages.

Connecting With Parents, Caregivers & Families

When it comes to caring about the healthy development of young people, parents and other family adults are often the strongest protectors of and advocates for their kids. This can be especially true when their children experience behaviors and circumstances that can compromise their health and positive development – including those related to bullying, bias and harassment.

Before your group begins working with Be SAFE, connect with the parents of your group members to let them know that the group will be exploring these issues. As you talk with parents, you may learn about things their child has experienced as a target of bullying behaviors, as someone who has carried out these hurtful behaviors, or both of these. Having this background information can help inform the care with which you help the group explore the focuses of Be SAFE. These conversations with parents can also provide opportunities for you to be on the lookout for resources highlighted within Be SAFE that may be helpful to share with them about some of the issues their family is experiencing.

As your group explores the focuses in Be SAFE, look for connections between your setting and the family setting. Throughout the Be SAFE activities, you'll notice “Connecting With Families” suggestions for ways that kids can have conversations with parents, siblings and other family members about the topics being explored.





Make sure you provide time for your group members to talk with your group about what they may have learned from these family conversations.



Throughout the Be SAFE experience with your group, be sensitive to what your group members – young people *and* adults – bring into the room as part of their family and cultural backgrounds. Some of what people share may be at odds with the content of Be SAFE. For example, within the culture of some families, people get messages about the need to “take care of their own” and “not get involved in the business of others.” These are important concepts to think about if you’re focusing on how we can be supportive allies to one another when bullying behaviors are happening. Provide opportunities to talk about these messages and issues. By acknowledging that these family and cultural messages may influence our roles and reactions within bullying situations, we support an environment of inclusion that recognizes the effects of differences.

Connecting With School Programs

Across the country, states have mandated that schools have anti-bullying policies and bullying prevention programs in place. In addition to schoolwide efforts addressing these issues, some schools may also have specific classroom curricula designed to help young people build healthy relationships, prevent unhealthy relationships and explore other issues related to those included in Be SAFE.

If you’re using Be SAFE with an out-of-school time group, consider how you can make connections with these kinds of school efforts. Check with your group members – as well as with staff of local schools – to find out more about school programs and ways you can complement and strengthen each other’s efforts. Stress the value of contributing to communitywide consistent and redundant messages related to these issues. You may also want to share Be SAFE as a resource that schools could use within their classrooms as part of their in-school efforts.





Assessing Changes in Your Group

Providing intentional time for reflection about a group's Be SAFE learning experiences allows all of us (kids and adults) to “think about our thinking” – to consider how what we've been learning and exploring may have affected our awareness, feelings, attitudes and knowledge about ourselves, as well as about those around us. Intentional reflection time can also help us recognize how these experiences may be transforming our actions related to how they treat ourselves, our friends, our peers and our families. While taking time to reflect is important for any kind of learning, this can be especially significant for the Be SAFE focus areas that are so connected to our physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

Focus Area 10: Reflecting on Our Be SAFE Experiences provides time for this intentional reflection and includes instructions for using the “Be SAFE Survey” that can be found in this guide. This survey is a retrospective survey, which means that your group members will indicate their responses to several statements **before** they started Be SAFE and **now** that they've finished Be SAFE (using a scale of “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “agree” and “strongly agree”). If you decide to use this survey with your group, be sure to check with your organization, school or agency about their policies related to getting parent or guardian permission to have children complete these kinds of voluntary and confidential surveys.

Focus Area 10 also highlights the “Be SAFE Group Assessment” tool. This tool is designed to provide a record of which Be SAFE activities you used with your group. You can also use it to record your thoughts about how this experience affected the group members' relationships with one another as well as the overall group climate. Capturing these reflections can be helpful information for the next time you use the curriculum. It may also provide important data to share with others in your organization, school or community who are interested in these issues.

If you're interested in learning more about efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of Be SAFE – including ways your group could become involved in larger evaluation processes – contact the curriculum authors (see contact information in the Acknowledgments section).





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My Notes



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Be **SAFE**

Safe, Affirming & Fair Environments

Be **SAFE: Safe, Affirming and Fair Environments** is a Michigan State University (MSU) Extension initiative designed to help young people aged 11 to 14 and adults work in partnership to create environments that are physically and emotionally safe. While the primary audiences for Be SAFE are young people and adults involved in out-of-school time settings (such as after-school programs, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, Scouts, Y's, sports programs and faith-based programs), the effort also applies to middle school settings. Be SAFE focuses on education and prevention of bullying, bias, harassment and other hurtful behaviors – as well as providing suggestions for intervening when young people are affected by these issues. It draws from extensive research from a variety of key disciplines – as well as from evidence-based bullying prevention programs.

The overall goals of Be SAFE are to:

- ▶ Promote social and emotional learning and development.
- ▶ Address and reduce bullying.
- ▶ Prevent bullying behaviors by tapping the wisdom and assets of youth and adults.
- ▶ Develop positive relationships with peers and adults.

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