

Theme 4: Staying safe at home – Parent's conversation

Before you start – Remember:

- Remind yourself of the Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- Check with the parent that this is a good time for the call
- Remember to ask both the child and parent if they are still happy to take part in the project
- Take notes so that you are able to complete the call log accurately after the call

There are options in red for children with special needs. Always begin with the instructions for typically developing children. Move to option 1 for a modified version of instructions for children with mild difficulties. For children with severe difficulties move to option 2 or 3. Visuals will be attached to this document to be shared with the children and parents. A video call is preferred over a regular telephone call with the child.

Beginning the time together

- Ask about what have been the best parts and most difficult parts of the last week
- Follow up on last week's commitment: Did they manage to put it into practice?
- Reminder of the process: What to expect from these calls and how long they will last

If the parent was shy or hesitant, share your experience of the past week (e.g., I had a long week at work, but I rested well during the weekend).

Introduce the theme: Staying safe at home

Today's topic is staying safe at home – by the end of our call we will have talked about:

- When we get angry
- How to use positive discipline with our children

Topic 1: When I get angry

Ask: What has been a time this week that you remember feeling angry about something or with someone at home? What did you do when you felt angry? *(Be prepared to share your own experience)*

Affirm: Under stress it is normal to feel more angry than usual – whether about big things or small! We love our children and teenagers, but the stresses of COVID-19, money and lockdown can make us angry. Our anger doesn't need to be out of our control – we can do things before and during it to help us manage it.

Option: If the parent talks about his/her struggle with the child with special needs, validate the parents feeling and normalize that fact that he/she is feeling this way. For example you can say something like: “Most parents of children with special needs are likely to feel more stressed during these times given the extra effort they should put in their daily life”, “it’s okay to feel this way but always remember that your child with special needs doesn’t behave this way on purpose”.

Ask: The same things usually make us get stressed and angry every time – can you see any patterns in what makes you angry and how do you normally react? Do you know what helps you to respond well?

Share: There are ways we can help ourselves prevent anger from starting – for example:

- If we usually get angry when we are tired, can we get more rest?
- If we are angry when we are hungry, can we make sure we eat? (*be sensitive to families who may not have enough food*)
- If we are angry when we feel alone, can we ask for support or make sure we connect with others?
- If we feel under pressure and overwhelmed, can we make sure we are doing something that we enjoy and taking some time for ourselves somehow?

Ask: Can you think of any ways you could prevent your anger from starting?

Affirm: That sounds great! But also, however much we prepare, we will all still feel angry sometimes! We can also be prepared to react to our anger in a positive way.

Share: **Taking a break** is one of the best ways to manage anger:

- When you start feeling angry, take a 20-second cool down. Breathe in and out five times before you speak or move.
- Go somewhere else for 10 minutes to regain control of your emotions. If you have safe outdoor space, go outside.
- [if relevant in your context:] Drinking alcohol can influence our reaction. Cut back on drinking or don’t drink, especially when children are awake.
- Do you have weapons or things that can be used to hit others? Lock them up, hide them, or take them out of the home.

Ask: Is there something we’ve talked about that you want to try to put into practice this week?

Topic 2: Using positive discipline with our children

Ask: What have you noticed about children’s behaviour during this time? Is it the same as usual or have you noticed more difficult behaviour?

Affirm: All children misbehave. It is normal when children are tired, hungry, afraid, or learning independence. And this can be extra hard to cope with when we are all at home together for a long time!

Option: Inform the parent that the child with special needs might have more difficult time expressing himself/herself verbally. Therefore, he/she might express their frustration in terms of negative behaviour, such as: shouting, not conforming to house rules, hitting, playing in an aggressive way, etc.

Ask: How confident are you in using positive discipline rather than physical discipline with your children? (Uses positive discipline: all of the time/most of the time/some of the time/none of the time)

Ask: What are some of the ways you help to encourage positive behaviours in your children?

Share: Some ideas for positive discipline:

- Encourage positive behaviour by using positive words to say the behaviour you want to see (e.g. 'Please put your books away' rather than 'Don't make a mess') and praise your child when they are behaving well.
- Redirect unwanted behaviour quickly when you notice it beginning, by suggesting another activity.
- Use consequences rather than hitting or shouting – this is more effective and teaches children responsibility. Giving your child a chance to follow instructions before giving them the consequence. Stay calm when giving the consequence and make sure it is something you can follow through with. Consequences should be proportionate and reasonable.

Option: Use a behavioural chart (Picture 4.1) on which you can provide tokens in the form of stickers (stickers of the child's preference [e.g., using stickers of Dora the Explorer]) to signify positive and appropriate behaviour. Choose one to three of the most important problem behaviors to target for change. Additional behaviors can be substituted in as the child's behavior changes. It is important for these behaviors to be defined clearly, i.e., "Kevin should take his shower every day at 3:00 p.m without crying".

Decide with the child the minimum number of stickers he/she needs to obtain by the end of the week to receive a reinforcer of his choice (in other words, the child must choose a gift from the beginning of the week to be able to obtain the gift by the end of the week only if he/she was able to obtain the specified number of stickers). In order for the reward to be motivating, it must be perceived by the child as desirable and worth working for. New rewards should be continually rotated in order to keep the rewards meaningful. What may be rewarding to a child one week may be less so the next week.

You may even start off by providing reinforcers for the child after the child receives a sticker on each of the days. This will help the child associate the reinforcer with the sticker that he/she gains once a good behaviour is carried out. It is important to initially set the goal at a level that is very easily achieved. If the goal is set too high, the child may perceive it to be unachievable and may not put forth the effort. The best way of establishing an appropriate starting goal is to keep track of how often the child performs the desired behaviors for a one-week period prior to starting the program. After that, you may gradually increase the number of stickers needed to receive a reinforcer.

The program should be explained to the child at a neutral time. The behaviors targeted for change and how to successfully perform the behaviors should be discussed.

In addition, the goal for earning the rewards and when the rewards will be given should be discussed. It is important to explain to the child from the start that as s/he attains success, the goals will gradually change.

It is essential that the parent reward the target behaviors with stickers in a consistent and accurate manner. In addition, the parent should use frequent praise and social attention for appropriate behavior throughout the day and when dispensing the stickers.

At a predetermined time, the parent should review the child's progress toward the goal. If the child obtained the goal for the week, the child should be given the reinforcer. If the child fails to obtain the goal, discuss with the child and check what best suits both of you before modifying the chart.

Ask: What will you do differently for one specific behaviour with one specific child this week?

Share: Sometimes something happens at home or outside that makes a child feel unsafe – abuse or violence against children is one of the things that can make them change their behaviour and seem to be behaving “badly”. If we notice changes in our child’s behaviour or see any physical signs of violence we should encourage the child to talk to us.

Option: Provide the child with visuals of possible forms of abuse they might encounter or have encountered (Picture 4.2). Ask them to point to any form of abuse they may have encountered.

Share: Share the appropriate procedure for reporting child abuse in your context (e.g. child helpline, social services, NGO or police)

Putting it into practice this week

Could you try to talk with your child together about what ideas you and they have for how you can both manage your anger effectively? What could you do if you notice each other getting angry? Try out the ‘I can calm myself down’ activity together (sent via WhatsApp or explained during the call).

Explain: The game and poster you will send over WhatsApp or in print – if possible

Confirm: What do they plan to put into practice with their child this week?

[Action to prevent anger / Action to manage anger / Try not to use physical violence at home / Different method of positive discipline / Other]

When will you meet again?

Ask: the parent if they are happy for you to speak to the child now and ask them to hand over the phone.

Theme 4: Staying safe at home – Child’s conversation

Before you start – Remember:

- Remind yourself of the safeguarding code of conduct
- Remember to ask the child if they are still happy to take part
- Take notes so that you are able to complete the call log accurately after the call

Inform the child that they are allowed to take breaks. Agree with the child on a sign or word that represents wanting to take a break when they need one (e.g., raising hand, crossing arms, or saying “break”). Prompt them to take a short break to stretch when you feel necessary.

Beginning the time together

- Begin with your regular check-in questions, such as:
 - What was the best thing that happened this week?
 - What was something funny that happened this week?
 - What was hard about this week?

Share some personal experiences from your week (e.g., the best thing about this week was meeting my best friend. A funny thing about this week was learning a magic trick. A hard thing about this week is not being able to go to the beach).

Option 1: How are you feeling today? What did you do today? Tell me about a game that you played.

Option 2: Ask the child “how are you feeling today” and provide a diagram of emotions to choose

- Reminder that these calls are about: checking on how you are doing, giving
- you a chance to talk and share how you are feeling, and sharing ideas together which can help you and your family
- **Ask:** Are you still happy to be part of this project?

Inform the child that we have many interesting activities and topics to discuss together and make sure that he is happy to continue.

Remember to provide brief breaks when needed (for stretching, toilet break, walking around, or having a snack)

Introduce the theme: Staying safe at home

Explain: Ask the child to tell you something they can do with the part of their body you name. You can take it in turns to ask one another, choosing a different part of the body each time.

Option 1: Start with identifying the body parts:

Say: show me your hand, show me your foot, etc.

Then ask: What can you do with your hand? What can you do with your foot?

Option 2: Show the child visuals of the different body part (Picture 4.3), and then ask them to identify them (while being assisted, if needed).

E.g. “Legs” – “Running fast!” “Eyes” – “Noticing when my sister is sad”

What’s something you’re glad you can do with your...

- Ears?
- Feet?
- Mouth?
- Hands?
- Legs?
- Eyes?

Note: Keep in mind the physical disabilities of the child, if any, while asking about body parts!

Explain that today we’ll be looking at how we can stay safe at home, including how we use our bodies in a positive way.

Topic 1: Me and my body

Ask: It’s great that we can use our body to do so many good things as we just talked about. But sometimes we can also use our bodies in less helpful ways – maybe to hurt others or even ourselves. Can you think of any examples of this?

Some examples might be:

- Using our hands to hit or hurt each other
- Using our feet to kick someone
- Using our mouth to say unkind words

Share: All of us get angry and upset sometimes (both children and adults!) and especially at the moment when things are hard and confusing, sometimes we can find it hard to stay calm and kind.

Ask: Can you think of a time you felt angry this week? What happened? What did you do? (Be ready to share your own example with the child, to show that all of us can find life difficult!)

Option 1: Explain “angry” before asking the question.

For example you can say: I feel angry when someone hits me. When do you feel angry? Have you felt angry at any point this week?

You can also use visuals to explain this emotion (Picture 4.4).

Option 2: Use visual emotions to show the child the “angry” emotion, then ask the child if they feel angry or happy today.

Ask: What do you normally do when you feel angry? Does this help you feel better?

Share: Some things we can do if we feel angry:

- Count to ten
- Walk away from the situation
- Breathe slowly and deeply
- Talk to someone you trust
- Do some exercise or physical activity
- Write or draw how you are feeling

Remind the child of the breathing technique that was practiced in call 3 and practice it again with him/her.

Ask: Will you try something different this week when you feel angry?

Topic 2: Someone I can talk to

Ask: What would you do if something happened to make you feel unsafe tomorrow?

Look at the **pictures**: if you are not feeling safe, which option would you choose?

Picture of Mother comforting her child (Picture 4.5)

Picture of Family member hugging the child (Picture 4.6)

For mild cases, the child can imagine a safe place (e.g., garden, playground). Visuals can be provided to help in the process (Picture 4.7 and 4.8). In addition, remind the child of the safe place activity carried out in call 3.

Do not prompt the child for answers, but record if they give any of the following answers:

[Talk to someone I trust/ Tell someone to stop what they are doing/ Get away from the situation/ Don't know]

Ask: Look at your hand and your five fingers. It's important that we have people to talk to in case we're feeling scared, upset, angry or sad. Can you think of five people you can talk to if you are having a hard time? (one for each finger) *(This might include parents, siblings, friends, wider family, teachers, mentors, faith leaders or others).*

Option 1: Can you think of 2 people you can talk to when you are having a hard time?

Option 2: Who do you talk to when you are feeling sad or angry?

Option 3: Do you talk to mom, dad, or (sister or brother's name) when you are feeling sad or angry?

Option 4: Provide visuals of family members (Picture 4.9) and ask the child to point to the person/people s/he speaks to when they are feeling sad or angry.

Affirm and ask: Can you still talk to these people at the moment? If not, is there someone else at home you can talk to?

Share: One of the other ways we can hurt one another is by touching someone in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable or when they do not want it. If that happens to us, we should know that we can:

- Tell this person to stop
- Get away from the situation
- Tell someone we trust about it

Option: Provide visuals (Pictures 4.10, 4.11, and 4.12) of the above options as you recite them.

We should never keep secrets that make us sad or worried, and so it's important to think ahead about who are the people that we will talk to if we ever feel worried. We should always tell someone if we feel worried about something or feel like something is making us uncomfortable.

Remind the child that while this programme is going on, you are also happy to listen to any worries they have, though it's great if they can find someone who is always there, like a parent or sibling, or teacher.

Wrap up: What can we do together this week?

Ask: What is one thing you will do this week to help you if you feel angry, or to talk to someone you trust?

Option: Summarize the options s/he chose when s/he feels safe. You can also summarize the options if you feel the child is stuck. It is also beneficial to summarize the options even if the child restates them correctly. Also, make sure to restate the options you provided the child with.

[Do something different if I feel angry / talk to parent about managing anger / talk to someone I trust if I am worried / other]

Close the call by thanking the child for talking with you, and explain when you will meet again.

Don't forget to praise the child for the effort. Encourage the parent and child to pin the date of the next meeting on a calendar and ask them to check the shared date on WhatsApp.

After the call

- Share the poster or image over WhatsApp or as a printout if you are able to: 'When We Get Angry'
- Share the activity over WhatsApp or as a printout if you are able to: 'I can calm myself down'
- Complete the call log now
- Contact your supervisor if any safeguarding issues have been raised or if you have any concerns

NB – images to share (your programme supervisor will share these with you)



4.1



4.2



4.3



4.4



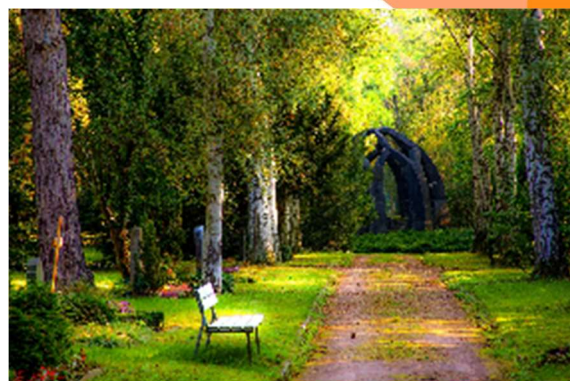
4.5



4.6



4.7



4.8



4.9



4.10



4.11



4.12



If 'when we get angry' is not available in your language, you may choose to use 'bad behaviour' or 'Keeping it positive' which also contain some points from this week's conversation. You may also choose to send these additionally.

