

A thick, green arrow pointing to the right, positioned horizontally across the page.

# ASKING FOR HELP

A home learning activity  
lesson for parents/carer



## **PARENT NOTES:**

Everyone needs help sometimes, yet many children will not ask for it when they need it most. This can result in some children not being safe, struggling to cope with their feelings and those around them unaware that help is needed.

## **TO ACCESS HELP AND SUPPORT MY CHILD NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO:**

- Recognise a situation or person is unsafe
- Be aware of who and where they can ask for help
- Know how to ask for help, and to keep asking until they get the help they need.

## **FOR MY CHILD TO BE COMFORTABLE TO JOIN IN THIS ACTIVITY, I CAN:**

- Let my child know the learning will take place. *This will give them some time to think about what they might want to talk about and share.*
- Find a quiet space for the learning to take place. *This will make sure you are not interrupted, and they are not worried someone will overhear what you are talking about.*
- Make it comfortable. *Find a comfortable space to sit, provide a drink and snack as well as a small teddy or fidget toy for them to use if needed.*
- Make a simple 'conversation charter'. *This will support you both to feel as confident and comfortable as possible to discuss anything that the activities lead to.*

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## **HOW TO MAKE A CONVERSATION CHARTER:**

1. Take 4 pieces of paper and work together to agree 4 things you feel are important to help you be honest and open with each other.
2. Work together to put these in order of importance to you, making a diamond shape. **NOTE:** There is no right or wrong order, it is simply what works for you and your child.
3. You could both sign your name or illustrate this to say you have agreed to it.
4. Keep it on display to remind you both of what you have agreed to.
  - We can tell each other anything
  - We will listen and not interrupt
  - We will not share what is said
  - We will not make each other say something

## HELP! I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT THESE THINGS...

Talking to your child about their feelings, relationships, changing body and experiences is important. Building good channels of communication throughout childhood can help your child communicate with you as future issues of increasing seriousness arise.

The aim of this resource is to provide you with structured activities to teach your child the information, values and skills to access help and support, when it is needed.

The activities will:

- Promote discussion, developing a healthy channel of communication between your child and yourself
- Develop the skills to ask for help, by being interactive and rehearsing how to do this
- Know everyone deserves help, and should receive this if they need it

The activities are designed in a way that will 'hold your hand' through them and support the discussion. **NOTE:** You are the expert on your child, so adapt the activities and approach them in the way that you know will work best for yourself and your child. You can go through the activities at your own pace; they don't have to be done all at the same time or even in the same week! The most important thing is to be as comfortable and confident as possible, role-modelling this will be teaching your child that you are someone they can talk to about any problem.

The activities may lead to your child telling you something that surprises or shocks you. Below are some 'Top Tips' for managing in the moment...

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### TOP TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR CHILD:

- Don't dive straight in! *Start by talking about something you both find comfortable, such as feelings and emotions about a film/story you have shared.*
- Use distancing: *If your child is struggling to start talking, ask your child what they think their friends/teddy (if very young) might know about the topic, as this provides a way for your child to share their thoughts indirectly.*
- Be prepared to listen. *Your child will want to have their voice heard without feeling judged. Feeling listened to will encourage your child to talk about issues now and in the future.*
- Stay calm! *Try to listen calmly, even if what they say surprises or concerns you. Remember that it is good they are comfortable to discuss these issues with you. They need to be able to trust you will not respond negatively.*
- If you don't know what to say, don't panic! *Sometimes a simple answer is fine. If your child asks you a question and you're not sure how to answer, let them know that you will find more information and answer at another time, making sure you remember to. If appropriate, you could work together to find the answer, so your child develops the skills of finding information from safe places.*

## MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD KNOWS THEY CAN ALWAYS TALK TO YOU ANYTIME, ABOUT ANYTHING

### ACTIVITY 1: SECRETS -V- SUPRISES



**Aim** of this activity is to help your child identify the difference between 'secrets' and 'surprises'. This will help them to talk about safe and unsafe people/situations, recognising when it is right to share a secret, in readiness for being able to ask for help.



#### **Resources:**

Box/bag; Small treat (sweets or a little gift)

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**Begin** the activity by explaining to your child that there is a difference between secrets and surprises. A surprise is different to a secret. It is nice to keep a surprise for something special and exciting, such as a birthday party or a present. A secret is something that is not meant to be shared in order to hide something bad.



Take a small box and place a nice surprise such as sweets or a small gift inside. Tell your child to imagine that it is their birthday. Pick up the box and open it, demonstrating your surprise through facial expressions, clapping hands etc. Shut the box and pass it to your child, inviting them to open the box and react to the surprise. Share how it makes you both feel to have a nice surprise.

Repeat the process, changing what is in the box, but this time when you open it show/tell your child what is inside when you open it before passing it to them to open. Share how knowing what was inside the box changes the fun and excitement of the surprise.



Taking it in turns with your child, say as many different surprises as you can think of. These can include: *Party; Present; Meal out; New clothes; Sweets; Ice cream; Trip; Visit from someone etc.* Next, take it in turns with your child to say as many different things that someone might ask you to keep a secret you can think of. These can include: *A friend showing you something online meant for adults to watch; Someone threatening to hit or hurt you, saying they will do it harder if you tell; Someone you are talking to online asking for information or a picture of you; Kicking a ball that breaks a window and running away so no one knows who did it; Another person touching the private parts of your body; Being dared to jump off something high; Taking money from your parents purse/wallet without permission etc.*



Taking each 'secret' in turn, discuss:

- What would you do if a friend told you this had happened to them?
- What do you think would be the 'right' thing for them to do?
- What would happen if they did the 'right' thing?

- What might happen if they continued to keep the secret?  
Do people always do the 'right' thing? Why is this?



**Finish** the activity by asking your child to share the difference between a surprise and a secret. Surprises are something exciting that will be shared in the end, whereas secrets can be scary and cause us to feel worried. Remind your child that it is fine to keep something as a nice surprise, but it is important to share a secret, even if they have been told not to, as they cannot be helped if no one knows. This includes if it about someone else. Ask your child if they have any questions or if there is anything that they want to tell you.

## ACTIVITY 2: HELP IS NEVER FAR AWAY!



**Aim** of this activity is to help your child identify who they can ask for help, when they have a problem.



**Resources:**  
Paper; Pens; Dice; Counter

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**Begin** the activity by explaining to your child that everyone experiences problems sometimes. There are lots of different places you can go to get help. Whatever the problem it is always OK to ask for help, especially if the problem is causing you to be upset, scared or in pain.



Take a piece of paper and each write a list of the different types of problems that someone a year or two older than your child might experience. Compare your lists to discover: Who identified the most problems; What problems had you both identified; What problems were different to each other's?



Discuss together each of the problems in turn:

- Is this a problem that someone might need help with?
- Why might they need help?
- Who could they ask to help them?
- If that person didn't help them, who else could they ask to help them?



Using the game from the next page, a dice and two counters (these can be cut out pieces of paper with different coloured dots drawn on), follow the instructions to play the game:

Starting with the youngest player, roll the dice and move the counter the number of spaces according to the dots on the top face of the dice.

- ☆ If you land on a red square: Suggest a problem someone of a year or two older than your child might face. You can refer to the lists made earlier to help.
- ☆ If you land on a green square: Suggest a person or organisation that someone could go to for help.
- ☆ If you land on an arrow, suggest a strategy for asking for help. These may include: *Contacting Childline; Writing a note to a parent; Taking a friend for support to speak to a teacher etc.*
- ☆ The winner is the first player to cross the finish line.



**Finish** the activity by asking your child to share with you some of the people/places they have identified as being good, trusted sources of support with problems. Remind your child that everyone has problems, big and small. Whatever the problem it is important to ask for help, especially if their problem is making them feel scared, upset or causing them pain. Ask your child if they have any questions or if there is anything that they want to tell you.

**GAME OF PROBLEMS AND HELP!**





### ACTIVITY 3: ASKING FOR HELP



**Aim** of this activity is to support your child to develop some of the skills required to ask for help.



**Resources:**  
Pen/pencil

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**Begin** the activity by explaining to your child that asking for help when a problem is being experienced is very important. Just as problems can be hard to experience, so can the experience of asking for help. Asking for help can take courage and bravery. It is important to always ask for help as soon as possible so the problem is dealt with as soon as possible.



Say a different person or organisation that can help them if they have a problem. These can include: *Family; Family friends; Teacher; Doctor; Nurse; Police; Childline; Social worker; Fireman; Lifeguard; Youth club leaders (Sea cadets; Brownies; Street Dance; Karate; Football etc); Local organisations such as Norfolk LGBT, Chat Health etc.* After each suggestion, take it in turns to shout out different methods of contacting them. These can include: *email; text; discuss face to face; chat room; write a letter; call etc.*



Discuss together each of the different methods of asking for help:

- Which method/s would be the easiest to use? Why is this?
- Does the method depend on the type of problem/person or organisation? Why is this?
- Which methods are the most effective in getting help? Why is this?
- Is it more important to ask for help, or get the most effective method?
- Which services can you obtain if you dial 999 in an emergency?  
*Lifeguard; Fire; Ambulance; Police.*



Provide your child with the mobile phone templates (on the next page). First, use the phone templates to rehearse dialling 999 in an emergency. As a pretend 'call responder', ask the following questions whilst your child rehearses the responses:

- Where are you? Can you describe what you can see if you are not sure where you are?
- What has happened? Who is involved?
- Is anyone hurt? Are you safe at the moment?

Reassure your child that anyone, including them can call 999 in an emergency and someone will answer their call very quickly. They would be asked to try and answer questions, similar to what you have just practiced, but it doesn't matter if they cannot.

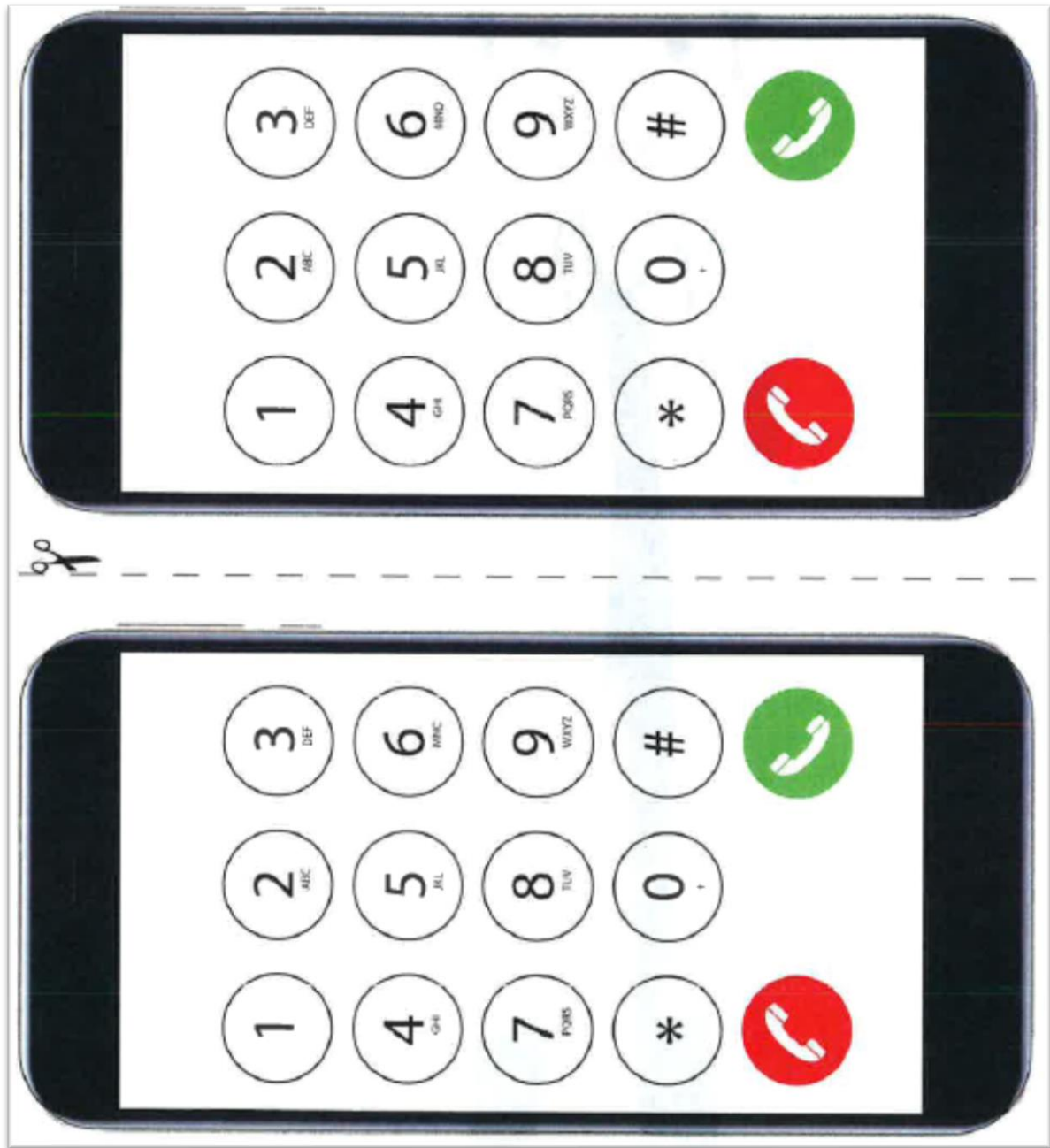
Think through some of the problems discussed previously and the different people/places they could go to get help, use the mobile phone template to rehearse asking for help by phone or messaging. Highlight any effective approaches with your child.





**Finish** the activity by asking your child to share with you some of the different ways they could ask for help. Remind your child that everyone has problems they need help with and reassure them that people will want to help them, however they ask for it. Ask your child if they have any questions or if there is anything that they want to tell you.

# MOBILE PHONE TEMPLATES



## GETTING EXTRA HELP



Watch the Contacting Childline video together and explore how to use the Childline website with your child. [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

