

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE STAYS OFFSIDE

#AbuseStaysOffside



Activity Guide

for the prevention of child sexual abuse
for coaches and physical education teachers

CONSEJO SUPERIOR DE DEPORTES | SPANISH HIGH COUNCIL FOR SPORT

AGES
7 - 12





**Activity Guide for the prevention of child sexual abuse
for coaches and physical education teachers
CONSEJO SUPERIOR DE DEPORTES | SPANISH HIGH COUNCIL FOR SPORT**

Campaign for the prevention and detection of child sexual abuse in sports

PROMOTED BY



Consejo
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Deportes

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Joven



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• INTRODUCTION:

This guide is a part of the Campaign “Child Sexual Abuse Stays Offside”, aimed at the prevention and detection of sexual abuse of children and adolescents in sports. The Campaign has been promoted and financed by the *Consejo Superior de Deportes* (Spanish High Council for Sport), together with the *Fundación Deporte Joven*, a Spanish Foundation that helps improve the lives of children and youth through sports, and the collaboration of the UNICEF Spanish Committee.

The technical revision of the products of this Campaign was courtesy of experts in the Council of Europe and the non-profit organisation “*Oro, Plata y Bronce*” [Gold, Silver and Bronze]. In addition, our Campaign is supported by the “Start to Talk” initiative of the Council of Europe.

• OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this campaign are:

1. *To raise awareness, train and inform the target population (and through them, children, adolescents and families) of the severity of sexual abuse in sports, based on the legal framework defined by the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention).*
2. *To define a list of ten key ideas for children and adolescents that will help them understand the boundaries that need to be respected to prevent abuse, as well as tips on what to do at the first signs.*
3. *To propose a series of activities to be carried out with children and adolescents so that, through simple games, they can internalise the concepts described in the above list.*
4. *To establish quality standards to be met by sports facilities in order to hinder the emergence of abuse, creating safe environments for sports practice for children and adolescents.*

• TARGET POPULATION:

This Guide is aimed at coaches and physical education teachers who work with children aged 7 to 12.

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WHY A GUIDE FOR THE PREVENTION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN SPORTS?

Child sexual abuse is a very serious problem that affects children and adolescents of all ages. It is the responsibility of all adults to prevent sexual abuse, that is why it should be addressed by everyone, also in the world of sports. This Campaign means to provide tools for efficient prevention with children in sports.

Child sexual abuse is one of the worst violations of rights. This abuse is proof that the environment which should have been protective has failed, and that is why efficient actions are so important to prevent and detect it as soon as possible.

The general data on child and adolescent populations indicate that **around 20% of children and adolescents suffer some form of sexual violence before the age of 18** (Campaign **“One in Five”** of the Council of Europe¹). In the world of sports, there could be specific risk situations of sexual abuse: abuse of power by coaches, other professionals or athletes, or even other children or adolescents; trips, concentrations and competitions without family supervision; loss of boundaries regarding physical contact...

Therefore, it is necessary to work on this topic with children and adolescents, so that, together with the other values they learn in sports, they can become emotionally stronger,

and know how to identify and face any risk situation they may experience.

This project includes the following materials:

- Guides to work on prevention directly in sports with children and adolescents in the various stages: from 3 to 6 (preschool), from 7 to 12 (primary education) and from 13 to 17 (adolescence). This is one of these guides.
- A guide for the detection of child sexual abuse in sports, aimed at professionals.
- A list of quality standards that sports facilities must meet in order to be safe environments.

The core objective of this prevention guide is to help all professionals in the world of sports to promote safe sport values and use them to ensure the children and adolescents they work with are protected.

¹ <https://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/1in5/>

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

The World Health Organisation defines violence against children as *“the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against a child, by another person or a group that either results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity.”*

And within the various forms there are of violence, the World Health Organisation defines sexual violence as *“any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.”*

The Lanzarote Convention², ratified by Spain, specifies that sexual abuse is considered *“engaging in sexual activities with a child under the age of 16”* (Article 18.1.a), except when these are *“consensual activities between minors”* (Article 18.3), or *“engaging in sexual activities with a child where: use is made of coercion, force or threats; or abuse is made of a recognised position of trust, authority or influence over the child, including within the family; or abuse is made of a particularly vulnerable situation of the child, notably because of a mental or physical disability or a situation of dependence”* (Article 18.1.b). In Spain, therefore, the following are offences, with prison sentences ranging from 2 to 15 years:

- Any sexual relation engaged by an adult with a child or adolescent under the age of 16.
- Any relation engaged by an adult with adolescents aged 16 to 18 from a situation of power.

That is why prevention and protection against child sexual abuse are legal obligations, not “optional” tasks.

Therefore, child sexual abuse includes acts that range from jokes to sexual advances, exhibitionism, voyeurism, showing or producing pornography and other acts without physical contact up to those with physical contact: kisses or caresses with sexual connotations, having the child come into contact with another person’s genitals or touching their genitals, mutual masturbation, up to penetration (oral, vaginal or anal).

There are many false ideas regarding this problem, which are deeply entrenched in society, families and professionals, and hinder the detection of cases when they occur. The most important ones are shown in the following table.

See table ►

²Convention 201 of the Council of Europe for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of 2007: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/convention>
In Spain, Instrument of Ratification of 12/03/2009, and published in the BOE [Official Gazette] number 274, of 12/11/2010, BOE-A-2010-17392.

MYTHS	FACTS
<i>“Child sexual abuse is infrequent, only the cases that appear in the news.”</i>	Statistics reveal that one in five children and adolescents has suffered sexual violence before the age of 18.
<i>“Sexual abuse consists of adult men who abuse small girls.”</i>	There are victims of both sexes : boys and girls, male and female adolescents. And perpetrators can be both male and female (although they are mostly men, there are also women who abuse), and sometimes also children and adolescents of both genders.
<i>“Those who sexually abuse children and adolescents are strange, weird people who inspire distrust and abuse by force.”</i>	Those who sexually abuse children and adolescents build up a false image of kindness and friendliness, and work on gaining the trust of children and adolescents, their families and professionals in the environment. Around 85% of perpetrators are people who are loved and respected by the children and adolescents (data from the Campaign “One in Five” of the Council of Europe).
<i>“Child sexual abuse leaves such evident signs that any person could quickly identify them.”</i>	Except for a few very obvious consequences (unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases), children or adolescents may conceal or even hide abuse due to shame, guilt or fear of retaliation.
<i>“In sports there must be less child sexual abuse, because it would be noticeable on the performance of children and adolescents.”</i>	Although in some cases sexual abuse has immediate consequences on performance, the sports culture that coping with pain is a part of being a better athlete means that many children and adolescents can live with abuse for a long time without showing any evident signs (there are always indirect consequences, but these are more difficult to detect).
<i>“If there is no physical violence, then there is no sexual abuse, because the child or adolescent is consenting.”</i>	Sexual abuse normally starts much before physical contact , by manipulating the child or adolescent so they will enter a web of silence (with gifts, bribery or inappropriate secrets), so by the time the physical part is reached, the child or adolescent does not know how to get out. They may remain silent out of fear, because threats and manipulation make them believe they cannot escape. Once their willpower is overridden, they are incapable of objecting, but this does not mean they are consenting. In Spain, a person under 16 does not have the legal capacity to consent to sexual relations, if they are aged 16 to 18, they cannot consent either if there is a relationship of power or authority from the person proposing sexual relations.

In the age group addressed by this guide, 7 to 12 year olds, it is necessary to consider the changes in development of these children. At these ages, children are already familiar with the basic concepts of human sexuality (with major differences, obviously, depending on their age and level of maturity), at least biologically, but they still have trouble understanding affective and ethical implications. Although they study human reproduction in school, they also receive a lot of information through the media, Internet and other information and communication technology: gender stereotypes, unrealistic expectations about partner relationships, myths and distortions about sexuality... Often they come across age-inappropriate information, and the silence of the adults around them, who consider them “too young”, may make them feel especially vulnerable. Sexual abuse at these ages is usually based on manipulation that combines an initial “making one feel special” with “bad secrets” (the pact of silence once abuse begins). The prevention activities are intended for children, who in many cases are already preadolescents, to be able to name what is happening, break the silence and ask for help from the network of people they trust.

In order to learn more about child sexual abuse, you can read the [Guide for the detection of child sexual abuse in sports](#), in this same Campaign, and the references cited therein.

KEY IDEAS FOR THE PREVENTION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN SPORTS

This programme works on ten key ideas with the children. Examples are provided here of how to explain each one of them to children aged 7 to 12. It is not a matter of talking about them all at once, but rather of communicating the messages clearly in each activity, or when they ask about the posters or bookmarks.

Sports can give you many good things: friends, fun, health, satisfaction... With sports you learn how to respect the rules of the game, to work in a team, to share.

But when something happens while practising sports that makes you feel sad, worried or in pain, here are some tips to help you ask for help:

Always remember that...

1. Respect is the number one rule in sports

Always remember that respect is the most important ground rule in sports. You have the right to be respected, and it is your duty to respect others (coaches, referees, judges, teammates, opponents...). Respect for someone is not submission. Just because they know more about something than you do doesn't make them infallible. Some things are wrong, no matter who does them.

2. It's not your fault

If a grown-up or another child hurts you or abuses you, it's not your fault. No one makes others treat them badly or hurt them.

Both boys and girls can suffer abuse. Don't think that because you are a boy it can't happen to you.



3. Sexual abuse is abuse of power

The great majority of people would never hurt a boy or a girl. However, there are some grown-ups and children who abuse other children. The people who want to abuse others use many different strategies to get what they want: they deceive, promise things, offer gifts, threaten... and it's not easy to see.

You'll be able to detect the people who mean well because they will take care of you and respect you. They will not hurt you on purpose and they will love you just the same whether you win or lose. Someone who means well will not force you to do something they know is wrong or that could hurt you.

4. Every person has their own role

Your achievements are your own, even if your coaches and family help you accomplish them. You share your achievements with those you care about: your family, your friends, your team, your coaches.

Your coaches may be great, but they are only your coaches. None of them should try to replace your family, or tell you that you are just like their child to them. Don't accept praise or gifts behind the rest of your mates, or if aimed at humiliating others.

In sports there are different people and each one plays a role. All people who participate in sports should respect the job of others: coaches, referees, athletes, spectators, parents, doctors... Everyone should accept and respect the functions of others.

When you look inside you, don't forget that...

5. Your body is yours and you can say "No"

There is an important rule in life which is also applicable to sports: your body is yours and everyone around you should respect it. You must also respect other people's bodies. Every person can decide what kisses, hugs or caresses they want to give or be given. You can say "No." And you have to respect other people's "No."

For example:

- No one should change your clothes even if you are slower, or go into your shower or watch you while you wash or change clothes. There are body parts that no one should touch without justification (because they're a doctor, nurse or physical therapist and they are treating a medical condition) and there should always be other people present.
- If somebody needs to talk to you privately, they can lower their voice wherever you practice, there is no need to be alone with that person. The areas where you train are large, and you can have safety and privacy at the same time if you move away a bit and talk quietly.
- No one can force you to kiss them, or touch their private body parts.

Remember that sexuality is important in life, but many people are embarrassed to talk about it. If there is anything that worries you, don't let embarrassment stop you from asking. Talk to your mother or father or to someone else you trust.

6. Some secrets can hurt you

There are "good secrets" that need to be kept (when somebody tells you they like someone, or when you are preparing a surprise party), and "bad secrets" which need to be told right away (when the secret makes you or another person feel bad, it hurts or entails

something your mum or dad would never let you do). Respect includes telling bad secrets right away and asking for help. It is not true that whatever happens during practice or competitions must stay there (code of silence), especially if it makes you or others feel bad: it is better to ask for help (code of care). If anyone asks you to keep a “bad secret”, say no.

7. Sports should make you feel good

Sports should help you feel better (about your body, but also about your feelings and your thoughts). Effort is not the same as pain. There are pains that help us learn when to stop and say “No.”

Your body is your ally. Both with physical and emotional wounds, if you pretend it doesn’t hurt, the wound gets worse.

Victories have a price, but sometimes it’s too high to pay. You don’t need to destroy someone to build a champion.

We want to protect you...

We want to protect you. Grown-ups should protect children. Your club, your federation, your school, your coach, your family and many other people should take steps to stop anyone from treating you badly and to help you if that happens.

We are working to improve those steps, but you too can help!

8. Don’t get cut off: participate in all the teams in your life

Participate in all the teams in your life (family, friends and school, as well as sports). Don’t lose contact with your family or your friends. Demand that your family is present, that they can watch you train and learn about your sports life, and stay in contact with your

friends, both in good and bad times. That way they can support you better because they will understand your work. And choose people who love you both within and outside your family.

9. Talk, think, decide and don’t keep quiet

Ask and make them ask you. You have the right to have things explained and to express your opinion about that which affects you. Decisions about your sports career are yours to make even if you are not yet 18.

Don’t be afraid to say “No” or reject any offer if you really don’t feel comfortable about it. You have the right to tell others what you like and what you don’t like to do, or what you like or don’t like to have done to you. That is not being rude.

10. And above all, take the first step: Ask for help!

Just as with a body injury, what makes you strong is talking about it and asking for help to get better. If someone makes you suffer, if someone is treating you badly, or if you see another kid suffering, talk about it and ask for help. If a grown-up won’t listen to you or won’t believe you when you talk to them about a problem or a strange situation, find someone else: there are many people who want to help you and protect you.

There are also free and confidential helplines that specialise in helping children.

For millions of children, sports means fun, health and friends. But not for others. **We want to be a big team to get rid of all the bad things in sports. And we want you in it! Your happiness is our biggest reward.**

ACTIVITIES

The following activities have been designed to work on each key idea with children aged 7 to 12. These are activities that can be carried out in any sports facilities and can be included in the warm-up exercises. Ideally, each key idea should be presented regularly, every week or every two weeks, depending on the frequency of training, and attention should be paid the rest of the time with reminders such as: *“Do you remember when we did this activity? How would it apply here?”*

Before conducting the activities, you must first inform the families. You can send the **“Letter of Introduction for Families”** together with the bookmarks with the key messages.

All activities can be facilitated by only one adult, but when there is another supporting person many more details can be perceived, such as group dynamics or individual responses that require further attention. There may be questions or comments that require further investigation, it is important to answer honestly and calmly, along these lines: *“That question is very interesting. I’m going to find out properly, because I want to be certain that I am giving you the full information, so I’ll let you know next week”* (and do so).

Some activities require some preparation, such as a list of sentences, or a “lucky bag”, or downloading material from the Internet, but it will not take more than a few minutes.

It is important to always end with a positive message, such as: *“We are here to protect you, ask us for help if you feel bad about something we have done today or mention it to me or another grown-up you trust.”* Between the ages of 7 and 10, it is not advisable to offer a telephone number or Internet service, support needs to come from people with whom they have a direct relationship and they trust. However, after the age of 9-10, we can provide children and adolescent helpline numbers: the main one is 116 111 which is run by different organisations in Spain, and it is also the number for Child Helplines in many European Countries. There are attractive posters that can be downloaded from the Internet, and often the organisations themselves can provide outreach materials. In any case, it is essential to also know the family helpline numbers which will be necessary to be able to provide guidance, if there are any disclosures.

Finally, it is important to offer children the possibility of providing their own ideas, new rules or alternatives, as adapting to their interests and needs will help them grasp the ideas better and ask for help if necessary. You can also offer a “suggestions box” and leave time in every session for each participant to be able to write something down on a piece of paper and put it in the box, or it may be left in a discreet spot so they can express their view at their convenience.

INTRODUCTION THROUGH “DEBUNKING FALSE BELIEFS”

Duration

20—25 minutes.

Resources

The usual space and resources for sports practice. Children should wear clothes to be warm enough and sit comfortably.

Objectives (messages worked on)

1 “Respect is the number one rule in sports”

2 “It’s not your fault”

3 “Abuse of power”

6 “Some secrets can hurt you”

10 “Ask for help”

Method

1. Explain that from now on you are going to do some activities so that the children become strong not only physically, but also in their relationships with other people. This is something that can also be worked on through sports. That is why you will be discussing several ideas based on each message: first you will ask them a question, let them discuss it and then come up with the appropriate answer. At these ages it is not necessary to directly address child sexual abuse, especially between the ages of 7 and 9, but it is good to know what to say if the children mention it themselves: it is a very harmful form of maltreatment that affects a whole person and you should always ask for help. If the topic of abuse does not come up, you can address it as prevention of maltreatment in general.

2. **Question 1:** “You know there are people who hurt children your age, right? Perhaps you have seen it, or it may have even happened to you. Who gets hurt more often, boys or girls? And who hurts others more often, men or women, boys or girls?” Answer 1: “Both boys and girls suffer maltreatment, and can suffer maltreatment from both men and women, and even from other boys or girls.”

3. **Question 2:** “Are those who hurt children your age usually strangers or people they know?” Answer: “Even though it may seem otherwise, it is usually people they know, whom children love and respect. It could be someone from their own family, or in school, or sports, or in the neighbourhood... Sometimes they are strangers, but most of the time they are people children know and love.”

4. **Question 3:** “If someone abused a teammate, do you think you would notice? How?” Answer: “When a child is suffering abuse, they are so afraid they become paralysed and do not usually show any signs of abuse. That is why adults should be very watchful, and so should children.”

5. **Question 4:** “If somebody were hurting you, would you be able to talk about it and ask for help?” Answer: “Sometimes it is easy to talk about what’s happened to us, but others it might be very embarrassing, we can end up thinking it was our own fault. If somebody abuses you, it is not your fault. That is why you always need to ask for help from an adult, and if that person won’t listen to you, find another one: there are many people who want to protect children.”

Evaluation

“How did you feel when talking about this? ¿What are the key messages you are going to remember?” (check they are going away with realistic ideas, debunking false beliefs).

Suggestions

- Depending on the level of the group, you can finish the activity by handing out the bookmarks and mentioning that those are the ideas you are going to be working on over the next few weeks. At these ages it is best to work on two or three ideas per activity until they are well established, because discussing all ten ideas at once can leave many points too unclear.



WHY DO WE FOLLOW RULES?

Duration

15—20 minutes.

Resources

The usual space and resources for sports practice. A “lucky bag”: prepare an opaque bag in advance with a mix of small pieces of paper with various messages. Two thirds of the papers will say: “You follow all rules”, and the other third will say: “You can skip rule X”, related to the sport that is being practised which should not affect safety but means going against the rules. For example, in football: “You can hold the ball in your hands even if you are not the goalkeeper”; in basketball: “You can walk with the ball as many steps as you like”; for individual sports: “You can sit down on the ground whenever you like”; for swimming pool sports: “You can float on your back (without crossing anyone)”...

Objectives (messages worked on)

1 “Respect is the number one rule in sports”

Method:

1. Briefly explain Message 1: “Respect is the number one rule in sports.”
2. Discuss with the children what rules they have to follow to do their sport safely. It is important to be clear on which ones are particularly important in sports (those preventing injuries and dangerous situations).
3. Next, discuss with children what rules must be followed for sport to go well (for it to be fun, for competition to be fair, to know how to react...). The idea is to come to conclusions such as that rules provide clarity, a level playing field and the possibility of having fun.
4. Then explain the aim of the activity: *“Now take a piece of paper from the bag, whoever gets the red paper can skip rule X [wait your turn in the queue, be quiet, don’t touch the ball with your feet, or with your hands...], and those who get the green paper have to play by following all the rules.”* Probably the children who get the skip the rules paper will need further clarification, therefore give them more guidance.
5. Start the practice with a short match or exercises in which they have to interact a lot, making sure the agreed rule is not followed safely, and pay attention to the emotional reactions.
6. After a few minutes (before anyone gets seriously upset or fights start), gather the group again and ask them how they have felt, first those who followed the rules and then those who did not. Try to elicit the importance of following rules to enjoy sports.

7. Direct the discussion towards what other rules (whether written or not) need to be followed to have a good sport, trying to come to the conclusion that it is important to respect others (team members, referees or judges, opponents, spectators...) and that others respect us too. And if they are not being respected, children should ask for help

Evaluation

“How did you feel when you saw how important rules are? How did you feel when somebody did not follow the rules? What other rules need to be followed in life?”

Suggestions

- You can give the same rule to be broken to several children and see how they do it, or each one a different rule and discuss the unease this can generate.

- You can do the activity a second time, with different people skipping the rules, to see how they feel when they know there are people who are going to break certain rules (see if they find solutions...).
- It is a good idea to select rules well so they can be broken without putting each sport at risk. For example: jumping the queue does not pose a special risk in football or basketball, but in swimming or gymnastics it could lead to dangerous falls; crawl swimming instead of breaststroke is not particularly risky in swimming, but running on all fours in handball could mean a risk of getting kicked in the head.
- To go into the key ideas in greater depth, you may ask the children to mention other rules they think are important, and also the ones they do not like or do not understand, both in sports and in life in general. You can include the children’s own ideas in the exercise, asking them for examples and suggestions.



THE PENDULUM

Duration

10—15 minutes.

Resources

The usual space and resources for sports practice.

Objectives (messages worked on)

3 “The right use of power”

8 “Don’t get cut off: participate in all the teams in your life”

Method

1. Explain the importance in our lives of being able to trust others, especially in sports (we trust the equipment will work properly, that people will follow the rules, that if anything bad happens to us somebody will take care of it...). That is why it is important to foster the relationships that take care of us, to avoid situations where they hurt us (Message 3: “When somebody treats you badly they are taking advantage and looking for the chance to do so”) and to stay in touch with those who treat us well (Message 8: “Don’t get cut off”).
2. Next explain the exercise with the help of three volunteers: A puts their feet together and keeps legs and body straight, with arms crossed over chest, and B and C pass A back and forth, holding them by the shoulders. The idea is for A to swing gently between B and C, experiencing trust. Gradually, B and C can increase the movement (making sure to keep A safe), but at a slow pace.
3. Divide the group into threes, rotating the three members in the “pendulum” position.

Evaluation

“How did you feel when doing the exercise? What was it like when you were the ‘pendulum’? And what about when you were pushing/holding? What people can you trust in your daily life?”

Suggestions

- Some children may wish to try being the “pendulum” with their eyes closed: it adds a deeper level of trust, so this possibility should always be optional, provided someone wants it, and only while they want it.
- With some children it might be interesting to form larger groups, of four or five people, to hold the “pendulum.” In this case, the pace must be very slow, because it can easily turn into something fast and unpleasant for the “pendulum.”
- This exercise works a lot on keeping physical contact to neutral parts (shoulders, crossed arms, upper back), so call attention to those who do not respect this.



THE THEATRE OF OUR SPORT

Duration

20—25 minutes.

Resources

The usual space and resources for sports practice.

Objectives (messages worked on)

3 “Abuse of power”

4 “Every person has their own role”

Method

1. Ask the children to list all the actors involved in the field of their sports practice, making sure they mention, at least: the children themselves, their coaches, refereeing and assessment personnel (referees, judges...), healthcare personnel (including massage and physical therapists), administrative staff, other staff in the sports centre (cleaners, maintenance technicians, caretakers...), other staff related to sports activities (drivers, event planners), families and spectators.
2. Next ask them, in groups, to try to show what each character would do if they did not use their power well and they took on a role they should not. For example, what happens when families try to train or act as referees, or when a coach tries to be the doctor or massage therapist. It is advisable to examine each character in depth, encouraging children who have prepared other characters to also offer feedback, before moving on to the next one.
3. Once you have critically analysed every character, you can go back in the same order, but this time the group will show what are the right roles for each one and how the power assigned to that role is used well.

Evaluation

“How did you feel when talking about the various roles and the right and wrong functions for each one in your sport? What things would you like to see change?”

Suggestions

- The activity may lead to a debate, which could be very positive, but it is important that each action mentioned is performed by the corresponding group, for a better visual, auditory and body assimilation.
- You can draw up a list of roles and functions that can be changed throughout other sessions.



SAYING ‘NO’

Duration

10—15 minutes.

Resources

The usual space for sports practice. A bag with “Yes” and “No” papers (for just over half of the children).

Objectives (messages worked on)

5 “Your body is yours and you can say ‘No’”

Method

1. Remind them of Message 5: “Your body is yours and you can say ‘No’” and explain that in this exercise they are going to work both on saying “No” and on respecting other people’s “No.”
2. Divide the children into two groups. Each child in Group 1 takes a piece of paper from the bag, reads it and spreads out across the available space.
3. Children in Group 2 should go around asking each member in Group 1 to shake hands, trying to get the highest number of yeses. If denied, they must reply “Thank you”, and move on to the next person.
4. When Group 2 has gone around most of Group 1, switch roles: Group 2 pulls out pieces of paper and Group 1 must go around.

Evaluation

“How did you feel when you said ‘No’? And what about when they said ‘No’ to you? Who would you like to say ‘No’ to in your life?” You can address other situations in which they would like to say “No” but they haven’t dared so far (being forced to kiss certain people, or some type of group hug or individual joke they do not like).

Suggestions

- You can design a path like a grid or maze, such as an obstacle course, but with different simultaneous entrances (so that Group 2 cannot identify who always says “Yes” or “No”).
- You can add variety to the game by including complex rules on the papers, such as “*You can say ‘Yes’ to every third person*”, or “*You should say ‘No’ to those older or physically bigger than you.*”
- You can change the shaking hands activity for something more related to sports: get help stretching or a brief warm-up exercise best done in pairs. Anyone who doesn’t have a “Yes” from their partner at that moment can stretch or warm-up on their own.
- For older children (over 10), rules can be further complicated by adding different actions to the group, so those asking have a broader range of gestures to ask for: “*You can say ‘Yes’ to a high five, and ‘No’ to a hug*” or “*You can say ‘Yes’ to a pat on the back and ‘No’ to shaking hands.*”
- When the dynamics have been fully understood and a couple of rounds have been completed, it might be very enriching to have the children themselves come up with the requests and the rules for accepting them or not.



GOOD SECRETS, BAD SECRETS

Duration

20—25 minutes.

Resources

The usual space for sports practice.
A “lucky bag” with each one of the recommended secrets (you can include variations or repeat some several times for very large groups). It is advisable to have previously thought about which is the space for secrets that need to be told (“Tell and ask for help”) and which is the space for secrets that must be kept (“Keep”). It could be something very basic, such as the left for one type of secrets and the right for the other, or something more symbolic (in the middle of the court if it must be told and in the stands or in a corner if it must be kept).

Objectives (messages worked on)

6 “Some secrets can hurt you”

But also:

2 “It’s not your fault”

3 “Abuse of power”

4 “Every person has their own role”

Method

1. Explain the difference between “good secrets” (which make us feel good inside and have to do with taking care of ourselves or others, for example, a surprise party, or not telling who somebody likes) and “bad secrets” (which make us feel bad inside and are dangerous for us or others, for example, somebody asks us not to tell their arm hurts so they can train, or somebody gives us a present asking us not to tell anybody about it).
2. Next explain the dynamics: divide the children into pairs and give each pair a piece of paper with a secret from the “lucky bag.” Each pair discusses in a low voice whether it is a secret that should be kept (in which case they will go to the “Keep” area), or whether it is a secret that should be told to an adult (so they go to the “Tell and ask for help” area).
3. Each pair explains why they have decided to go to the “Keep” area or the “Tell and ask for help” area, also mentioning whether they agreed or not. The aim is to foster discussion with the contributions of the rest of the group. The facilitator should ensure the criteria to classify into “good secrets” and “bad secrets” have been properly understood.
4. Ask the children to give other examples in their everyday life of “good secrets” and “bad secrets” for the group to classify and discuss how they behaved at the time and how they would behave now that they know more about secrets.

Evaluation

“How did you feel when doing the exercise? Have you discovered that you should tell a grown-up a secret you’ve been keeping until now? Who can you tell?”

Suggestions

- You do not need to wait until a pair has made a decision to move on to the next person. It may be interesting to have the whole group whispering while they are trying to make a decision.
- It is a good idea to do a second round changing pairs, to see whether the concepts of “good secrets” and “bad secrets” have sunk in. This can be done immediately afterwards, prolonging the session, or on another day.
- This is an activity that can be done several times, increasing the level of complexity of the situations.
- The Table shows some examples (you can repeat in the same group, to find different answers, or change slightly to add complexity):



GOOD SECRETS	BAD SECRETS
<p><i>“It is X’s birthday and we’re going to give him/her a surprise.”</i></p> <p><i>“My parents have told me we’re expecting a baby sister, but it’s not official yet because there are still many months to go, please, keep the secret.”</i></p> <p><i>“My parents have told me they are going to give me new sports gear as a surprise for my birthday, but don’t say anything until I see what they’ve given me, please.”</i></p> <p><i>“I got a prize, but please let me announce it next week, because I can’t go to practice today.”</i></p> <p><i>“There’s going to be a magician at my party, but don’t tell the others, I want it to be a surprise.”</i></p> <p><i>“I like X, but please don’t tell anyone, because it’s embarrassing.”</i></p> <p><i>“I’m going to do a try-out with another team, but please don’t say anything until I know whether I’ve been picked or not.”</i></p>	<p><i>“My arm hurts, but don’t tell because I don’t want to miss practice.” (Injuries should never be hidden and they should always be treated).</i></p> <p><i>“I feel bad because X always compares me to the other kids on the team and says I am clumsier, but don’t tell anyone, I don’t want him/her to dislike me even more.” (Humiliation is a sign that you need to ask for help from another grown-up).</i></p> <p><i>“This was given to me by X, who is a grown-up, but he/she told me not to tell anyone. Don’t tell, please.” (Gifts from adults cannot be total secrets).</i></p> <p><i>“I saw X and Z take something from Y’s bag, but they told me not to say anything because it’s a joke.” (You cannot keep a secret that is going to make someone else feel bad).</i></p> <p><i>“My grandmother buys me sweets and tells me not to tell my mother.” (Adults should be clear with their messages and be responsible for their decisions; the correct message from the grandmother should be something like: “Don’t you worry, I’ll talk to your mum later and if she gets angry because I’ve bought you sweets, she’ll be angry with me.”)</i></p> <p><i>“X makes me kiss her/him when we collect the equipment.” (Physical expressions of affection should always be voluntary, never forced).</i></p>

GOOD SECRETS	BAD SECRETS
<p><i>“I’m going to ask X out, but don’t say anything until I know whether he/she says yes or no.”</i></p> <p><i>“My coach has told me she’s going to appoint X captain, but to wait until she announces it at the end of today’s practice.”</i></p> <p><i>“In class they sat me down next to X, whom I like very much, please don’t come to my seat and joke about it, I don’t want him/her to know.”</i></p>	<p><i>“X always brushes against me in a way I don’t like whenever he/she walks past me.” (Unpleasant physical contact should always be mentioned to an adult).</i></p> <p><i>“X gives me a lift home after practice, but he/she has told me not to tell my parents, he/she says to tell them I’ve taken the bus.” (Children should not keep secrets of adults from their family).</i></p> <p><i>“X and Z pick on Y in the changing room, and I feel bad, but don’t say anything, in case they start picking on me too.” (Aggression against other children should always be reported to an adult, or several, until a protection response is received).</i></p> <p><i>“Coach says we can’t tell anyone what we do during practice so that they won’t know what our tactics are.” (Under the age of 12 this is a dangerous message: children have the right to talk about everything that goes on during practice, there is no justification to “keep tactics secret”).</i></p>

BLINDFOLD NAVIGATE

Duration

10—15 minutes.

Resources

The usual space and resources for sports practice.

Objectives (messages worked on)

5 “Your body is yours and you can say ‘No’”

7 “Sport should make you feel good: listen to your body”

10 “Ask for help”

Method

1. Go over Message 5, “Your body is yours and you can say ‘No’”, Message 7, “Sport should make you feel good: listen to your body”, and Message 10, “Ask for help”, and explain that in this exercise they are going to have their eyes closed in order to identify how they feel and so they can ask for help.
2. Divide the group into pairs, one person guides the other one with eyes closed. The facilitator of the activity can change the pace (“Now slowly”, “Now walk quickly”, “Now run”), reminding them that they must not bump into each other.
3. The directions for children with eyes closed is to continue with the exercise only if they feel “slightly uneasy.” The moment they feel “very uneasy” they must say “No” and ask for something, for example, “Let’s go slower” or “Not in circles”, and the guide will do it.
4. Whenever deemed appropriate, switch roles.

Evaluation

“How did you feel when you were being guided? And how about when you were the guide? Were you able to ask for something or to say ‘No’?”

Suggestions

- You can switch the Guide around several times, so that those blinded can experience different styles, one after the other.
- You can prepare scarves or towels (or their own tracksuit) to tie around their head and ensure they are blindfolded.
- You can explore different styles of guiding: leading a person by their shoulders, holding their arm, taking their hand, leading them only with a finger...
- If there is enough time you can set up some small obstacles, to add complexity to the procedure, but without posing a risk: a chair, a rope they can’t step on, a ball they must go around...



WHERE DO I FEEL IT?

Duration

10—15 minutes.

Resources

The usual space for sports practice. Sticky notes like Post-Its, each one with one of the activities on the table, and a vertical surface to put them on (a wall, a board, a hanging cardboard...). You can make a silhouette like the one in the picture to facilitate the task.

Objectives (messages worked on)

7 “You need to feel well in your own body”.

Method

1. Explain that in sports and in life, it is essential to listen to what our body is telling us, especially when it indicates there is something making us feel bad. That is why we are going to look at what it is like when it makes us feel good.
2. Ask the children: “When you feel something, where do you feel it?” You can give them everyday examples (“When you eat something yummy”, “When you see a special friend”, “When you take a shower after a hot day”, “When your mum gives you a hug”, “When you finally understand a very difficult exercise”, “When you learn something you like very much: a language, your favourite subject”). Use the children’s answers to explain that when we feel something we can feel it **“in our heart”** (emotional and social intelligence: it has to do with affection and relationships with people), **“in our tummy”** (somatosensory intelligence and body memory: it has to do with safety, with health, both physical and mental, and bodily well-being), and sometimes also **“in our head”** (logical or analytic-synthetic intelligence: it has to do with learning, knowledge, future plans...).

3. Next, give two or three notes to each child, who has to place them in the appropriate area (“tummy”, “heart” or “head”).

4. Highlight that most notes are in the heart and tummy because the most important dimensions of emotional well-being are related to feeling loved (“heart”) and feeling safe (“tummy”). Now reposition any notes in the wrong place.

5. You can remind them that, in the end, everything has a bit of the three levels, and when we talk about our stomach or “tummy”, we mean all the feelings everywhere in our body. You can explain that this exercise is done to see the importance of the body

processes and safety because in abuse, our body feelings are the first physical signs of alarm, and the fear caused by abuse breaks down our safety. That is why our stomach feelings are essential for our protection.

Evaluation

“How did you feel when doing the exercise? Have you discovered that we feel things differently when we feel them ‘in our tummy’ from when we feel them ‘in our heart’?”

Suggestions

- You can hand out different coloured sticky notes, one for “head” feelings, another one for “heart” feelings and another one for “stomach” or “tummy” feelings.
- You can ask the children themselves to give examples of other pleasant feelings and have the rest of the group classify them.
- If you cannot write things down, everyone can describe their three things by pointing at their own body (if anybody does not want to do it, let them, and move on to the next person).



MOSTLY “TUMMY”	<i>Eating or drinking something you like. Sleeping. Resting. When you enjoy training even though it is tiring. Dancing. Singing. Roaring with laughter.</i>
MOSTLY “HEART”	<i>When your mum says she loves you. Spending the afternoon with your best friend. When your coach congratulates you for a sports achievement. When you are invited to a fun party.</i>
MOSTLY “HEAD”	<i>Learning something interesting. Reading books you enjoy. Thinking about what you want to be when you grow up.</i>

“SPEAK UP” ASSEMBLY

Duration

30—40 minutes.

Resources

A space for having a quiet conversation. Children should wear clothes to be warm enough and sit comfortably. It may be useful to have a board or somewhere to write things down, but it is not essential.

Objectives (messages worked on)

9 “Talk, think, decide and don’t keep quiet”

Method

1. Have the children sit in a circle, so they can see each other. The facilitator should be at the same level (if the children are sitting on the ground, so should the facilitator; if they are on chairs, the facilitator will be too).
2. Ask them three questions:
 - “What are the three best things about doing your sport (practice, competitions...)?”
 - “What are the three worst things about doing your sport?”
 - “What would you suggest to make practice and competitions better?”
3. Children discuss their ideas. The facilitator should try not to answer or justify or explain, just ensure each idea has been understood. Note that all ideas are constructive because they help identify how to do things better (or how to explain in future that which has not been understood).
4. End the activity when everyone who wanted to speak has spoken and thank them for their ideas (nobody should be forced to speak).

Evaluation

“How did you feel when talking about the practice of your sport in your group? Did you feel listened to? Have you learnt anything?” (The expectation is that they have discovered they can speak and have an opinion).

Suggestions

- In large groups or when children are not used to talking, it might be interesting to have them first share each question in pairs (better with someone they do not know very well) and then ask them to discuss them in the large group.
- It is good to write down the ideas because there are usually some very interesting contributions. If you cannot use a board, you can use sticky notes (like Post-Its) and group ideas by topic on a wall or the floor, or you can write them down on paper.
- It is important to follow up on what is discussed, putting useful ideas to practice and repeating the assembly regularly (depending on the intensity of training, once a week, once a month...).



KEEP IN TOUCH

Duration

10—15 minutes.

Resources

Light items related to sport, that can be held with two fingers (balls, sports gear, swimming floats...). You can also use drinking straws or balloons. All items should have the same weight and shape, to ensure the same level of difficulty.

Objectives (messages worked on)

8 “Don’t get cut off: participate in all the teams in your life”

10 “Ask for help”

Method

1. Explain to the group Key Message 8: “Don’t get cut off: participate in all the teams in your life.”
2. Next explain they need to form a group in which all the children are connected to two others through the items picked, which they need to hold up in the air with a single finger.
3. Once the group has been formed, they need to move in a block without losing contact and without dropping the items. The facilitator may indicate directions (towards the right, go back...), turns (turn 180 degrees) or changes in shape (triangle, square, circle) or size (make the group bigger, or smaller).
4. If contact is lost at any point, children may ask their nearest mates for help, or support people can be appointed.
5. It is advisable to end the activity with a joint movement, such as: “Now everyone drop all the items” or “On the count of three, throw the items up in the air.”

Evaluation

“How did you feel about having to stay in contact on both sides? Did you notice the importance of teamwork and relying on others? What people do you always want to stay in contact with in your life?”

Suggestions

- After the age of 10 you can propose more complex patterns with crossings, such as: “Now the whole group has to go between X and Z (two group members) without losing contact” or “Now you have to make a double, curved line.”
- To make the message “Ask for help” even clearer, you can do the exercise in silence first and then ask them to talk to each other, but only asking (they cannot give orders), such as: “Could you slow down, please?” or “I need you to come closer/move away.”
- In very large groups, the activity may be split into two or more teams, either simultaneously or with one team conducting the activity while the other one watches and helps, and then switching.



THE PARADE

Duration

15–20 minutes.

Resources

Light, resistant materials, best if related to sports (balls, towels, floats...).

Objectives (messages worked on)

10 “Ask for help!”

Method

1. Explain to the group Message 10: “Ask for help!”
2. Next divide the group in pairs, one with the role of “Parader” and the other one the “Helper.” The “Parader” should try to carry as many items as possible (balls/towels/floats), and to do so they give the “Helper” instructions, for example, to place a ball under each arm and two more on their crossed arms. The “Helper” can only do exactly what the “Parader” asks, without adding anything (the aim is to learn how to ask for help precisely).
3. As soon as the “Paraders” are ready, the facilitator will ask them to parade. If they drop an object, they need to stop and ask the “Helper” for help. There can also be group pauses to replace the items. This is not a competition to see who can carry more things or go further, that is why it is important to remind them that the aim is to learn how to ask for more in a way that will be useful, so they can try out different ways of asking for help.
4. At some point, it is advisable to switch the “Helpers”, they should leave their pair and go find another child, and start the activity again, so they can see what it is like to ask for help or get it from others.
5. After some time, switch roles and pairs: those who helped will now parade and those who paraded will now help, with the same instructions.

Evaluation

“What did you find easier, helping or asking for help? Which are the best ways of asking for help?” (“Put the fourth ball between my neck and right shoulder” is normally more useful than “Fix it”).

Suggestions

- You can change the pace of the parade and pauses, making them parade while they hear clapping or music, and repositioning items during pauses.
- You can make the task more difficult by making each child have to carry various items, for example: three balls, one towel and a sports bag; or in a swimming pool, two noodles and two kickboards, etc.
- If there are not enough items for everyone to carry the maximum load possible, you can do it in groups and turns, while the rest watch and learn different ways to ask for help, until all the children have done it.







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