

# 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  
13 - 17





**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  
Superior de  
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IN COLLABORATION WITH



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Deporte  
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 adolescents aged 13 to 17.

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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 Europe<sup>1</sup>). 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.

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<sup>1</sup> <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 Convention<sup>2</sup>, 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 ►

<sup>2</sup>Convention 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 <b>one in five</b> 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 <b>victims of both sexes</b> : 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 <b>85% of perpetrators are people who are loved and respected by the children and adolescents</b> (data from the Campaign <b>“One in Five”</b> 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), <b>children or adolescents may conceal or even hide abuse due to shame, guilt or fear of retaliation.</b>
<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 <b>many children and adolescents can live with abuse for a long time without showing any evident signs</b> (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>	<b>Sexual abuse normally starts much before physical contact</b> , 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, 13 to 17 year olds, it is necessary to consider the changes in development of these youths. At these ages, adolescents are already familiar with the basic concepts of human sexuality (with major differences, depending on their age and level of maturity), at least biologically, to a great extent because they are experiencing the changes of puberty. However, throughout adolescence they still need to understand the affective and ethical consequences of their actions, including all of their sex life. Although they may have studied human reproduction in school, they also receive a lot of information through the media and the Internet and other information and communication technologies and, above all, from their peers. These messages are frequently not very healthy: gender stereotypes, unrealistic expectations about partner relationships, myths and distortions about sexuality... Often they come across inappropriate information, and the silence of the adults around them, who are uncomfortable talking about sex, makes them feel especially vulnerable. Sexual abuse at these ages is usually based on manipulation that combines an initial “feel good”, using certain aspects that are supposedly “romantic” or of “sexual initiation”, and “bad secrets” (the pact of silence once abuse begins). The prevention activities are intended for adolescents to be able to identify 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 adolescents. Examples are provided here of how to explain each one of them to the young people you work with. The introductory activity works on all of them, and furthermore it is important to be able to communicate the messages clearly in each activity, or whenever 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

Sexual abuse is a crime.

If an adult or another guy or girl kid abuses you, it is not your fault. No one provokes abuse.

Boys are also abused. Don't think that because you are a male 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 both adults and kids who abuse other kids. Sexual abuse is not a matter of sex, but of power.

The people who want to abuse others use many different strategies to get what they want: they deceive, promise things, give gifts, threaten... and it is not easy to see. There are kids who have been abused by their coaches, by their doctors or physical therapists, by relatives of friends, by their own teammates...

You will be able to detect the people who mean well because they 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 must 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 "caring secrets" that need to be respected (when somebody tells you they like somebody else, or when you are preparing a surprise party), and there are "harmful secrets" which should never be kept (when the secret makes you or somebody else feel bad).



Real respect includes telling harmful 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 “harmful 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. Adults must protect kids. Your club, your federation, your school, your coach, your family and many other people should take steps to stop anyone from abusing you and to help you if it 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 abusing you, 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 from abuse.

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

For millions of kids, 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 kids aged 13 to 17. 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).

For some activities it will be necessary to prepare something, such as a list of sentences or an in-depth review of the key ideas, 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.”* At these ages it is advisable to 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 also online services. 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 young people 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 “BOOKMARK PRESENTATION”

## Duration

20—25 minutes.

## Resources

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

## Objectives (messages worked on)

The ten key ideas

## Method

1. Explain that from now on you are going to do some activities so that the kids become strong not only physically, but also in their relationships with other people. This is something that can also be worked on through sports.
2. Next, hand out the bookmarks and divide the youths into small groups, one for each sentence, so that each group can discuss its meaning, its relationship with sexual abuse and give an example of a situation in which this sentence would apply.
3. Bring all the kids together again and have the spokesperson present the situation they have thought about and the meaning of the sentence. The aim is for the kids to be able to ask questions, or give examples, with contributions from the facilitator.
4. You can ask the kids to come up with proposals to examine each idea, telling them there are exercises which have been prepared, but that you can also spend more time on those areas that interest them most.

## Evaluation

*“How did you feel when talking about this? What are the key messages you are going to remember?”* (and check they have understood the key ideas well, although you can delve further during the following activities).

## Suggestions

- If it is a very small group, you can divide the kids into pairs, or even have an initial round of the first five key ideas and a second round with the rest, as it is essential that they can discuss among their peers before talking to the rest of the group.
- This activity can be repeated in the middle and at the end of the programme to see how they start linking ideas.



# WHERE DO I FEEL IT?

## Duration

20—25 minutes.

## Resources

The usual space for sports practice. Pens for all the kids. Sticky notes like Post-Its and a vertical surface to put them on (a wall, a board, a hanging cardboard...). You can make a silhouette like like the one in the picture to facilitate the task, but only if they see it as an abstract diagram and do not feel it is “too childish for their age.”

## 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 kids: “When you feel something, where do you feel it?” You can give them everyday examples (“When you eat something you like”, “When you see the person you like”, “When you take a shower after a hot day”, “When your mother 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 kids’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 stomach”** (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 each kid three sticky notes and ask them to individually write in each one what are the three things they need to be happy (without which they cannot imagine being happy).
4. When the whole group has finished writing, ask each kid to come up and put each one of the things that makes him/her happy where they intuitively think it should go. This provides a more general map of the elements in life necessary to be happy.
5. Highlight that most notes are in the heart and stomach because the most important dimensions of emotional well-being are

related to feeling loved (“heart”) and feeling safe (“stomach”). Next, reposition any notes in the wrong place, which are usually health (sometimes it is placed on the “head” and it goes on “stomach”) and money or work (which is placed on “the head” and it goes on “stomach” because they are related to well-being and safety). The things that tend to appear most frequently are, on “the stomach”: home, food, health, work, money, travel, music and dancing; on “the heart”: family, partner, friends and social relations; and on “the head”: education, knowledge and projects.

6. You can remind them that in the end, everything has a bit of the three levels, and when we talk about our “stomach” 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 stomach’ from when we feel them ‘in our heart’ or when we feel them ‘in our head’?”*

## Suggestions

- At these ages it is important to have something in writing. If there is no possibility of having the kids writing individually, it would be good to have a board on which they can each write their three things and thus have a group overview. Obviously, if somebody does not want to do it, you let them and move on to the next person.



# HOW DO WE RESPECT?

## Duration

15—20 minutes.

## Resources

The usual space and resources for sports practice.

## Objectives (messages worked on)

1 “Respect is the number one rule in sports”

## Method

1. Remind them of what you saw in the previous activity, just like there is a “stomach” intelligence, and a “heart” intelligence and a “head” intelligence, you can experience respect or lack of respect from those three levels too: “head respect”, “heart respect” or “stomach respect.”
2. Divide the kids into three groups: a “head respect” group, a “heart respect” group and a “stomach respect” group. Give each group a few minutes to identify examples of respect or lack of respect for the category they have. You can give initial, general clues, such as: *“If somebody pushes you, what kind of respect are they violating?”* (“stomach”), *“If somebody makes fun of you, what kind of respect are they violating?”*, (“heart”), *“If somebody says your favourite film is stupid, what kind of respect are they violating?”* (“head”); and then provide specific examples of sexual abuse, such as: *“If somebody touches your genitals without you wanting them to, or watches you while you shower”* (“stomach”), *“If somebody threatens to leave you if you don’t have sex with them”* (“heart”), *“If somebody leaves you out of the team not because of your sports skills but because you wouldn’t have sex with them”* (“head”).
3. Gather the whole group again and have each spokesperson present the examples they have come up with. The facilitator must encourage comments from kids in other groups and always focus on finding which kind of respect it would be in each case. For the previous examples, *“‘Stomach’ respect would be not pushing, saying ‘excuse me’ to get past”, “‘Heart’ respect would be not making fun of anyone, not humiliating anyone”, “‘Head’ respect would be letting everybody think as they please, provided it does not endanger or hurt others.”*

## Evaluation

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



## Suggestions

- This activity can be repeated later on, because as the prevention programme progresses, kids’ awareness will develop and you can work on new nuances.

“STOMACH” RESPECT	Respect for bodily integrity. Respect for health or lack of it (when there is an injury or illness). Respect for each person’s sexuality. Respect for identity (social, ethnic, religious, cultural).
“HEART” RESPECT	Respect for the feelings of others. Respect for everyone to have their own special and beloved people and respect for those people as well. Respect for each person’s autonomy.
“HEAD” RESPECT	Respect for each person’s opinions. Respect for each person’s capabilities. Respect for each person’s interests and aspirations.



# 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: “Abuse of power”) 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.
4. Keep delving into the idea of the right use of power and having a trusted network with questions such as the following: “*What do you need to trust someone?*” (for example, knowing them, having them first open up to you, having them not lie to you, having them respect you and care for you). “*And what would you need to be trustworthy?*” (among other things, not to lie, not to deceive, not to reveal the good secrets you’ve been told).

## 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 kids 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 kids 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 kids to list all the players involved in the field of their sports practice, making sure they mention, at least: the kids themselves, their coaches, refereeing and assessment personnel (referees, judges...), healthcare personnel (including massage and physical therapists), administrative staff, other staff from the sports centres (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 kids 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

- If the idea of acting is difficult for some kids (some enjoy externalising their experiences very much, but it is also an age of great fear of ridicule), you can turn the activity into a debate. In this case, it is important for each role to be analysed by a small group before it is presented to the rest.
- You can draw up a list of roles and functions that can be changed throughout other sessions.
- It would be interesting to provide an opportunity for the kids themselves to propose their own initiatives to make the sports environment a safer place, taking on board feasible ones and helping to put them into practice.



# SAYING ‘NO’

## Duration

10—15 minutes.

## Resources

The usual space for sports practice.

## 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. Once they are in a circle, tell them that, in order, they need to ask something out loud from the person on their right, and that person can reply “Yes” or “No.” You cannot repeat any request (although it can be adapted). You can start with harmless messages, such as: “*May I hold your hand?*”, “*Will you switch places with me?*”, “*Will you fetch me a ball/towel?*”
3. After a first round of reasonable requests, you can move on to a round of unreasonable messages, encouraging them to notice how they feel and to explain why they would not do it. For example: “*Can I have the password for your mobile phone?*”, (we must respect everyone’s privacy), “*Will you give me your trainers?*” (we don’t give anything away that we need for practice), “*Can I see your girlfriend’s/boyfriend’s messages?*” (don’t violate another person’s privacy).
4. Do a third round, this time speaking about other third parties, in situations of specific abuse and harm to someone. For example: “*A mate asks you to put something in your bag which they have just taken away from the coach, so it won’t be found in his/her own bag*” (you cannot collaborate in hurting others); “*The coach asks to record a video of you while you shower*” (no nude images of minors are ever allowed); “*The doctor insists on giving you a massage when she is not a massage therapist and you’ve gone to see her because you have a sore throat*” (in physical contact, even with healthcare professionals, everyone has their own role, and the role of giving a massage is for physical therapists, and only for the right reasons); “*The head of the centre you live in does not allow your parents to visit you*

*because he says it will distract you”* (it is one thing not to be continuously at all practices, but you cannot deny a family access to their children).

## Evaluation

*“Would you do whatever they asked you to do? How far? 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 have not dared so far (being forced to kiss certain people, or some type of group hug or individual joke they do not like).

## Suggestions

- If this is a safe group, with enough trust, you can do the activity allowing each member of the group to choose who they want to ask. If the group is not safe enough, it is best to follow the order of spatial distribution or whatever is decided by the facilitator.
- If you wish to lessen the emotional intensity of the exercise, you can conduct three rounds as if someone else were asking: “*Your brother wants X from you*”, “*Your boyfriend/girlfriend says you should do Y*”, “*Someone proposes Z*.” In this case you can also play with the answers given to different people.
- You can encourage the kids to say how they would improve the exercise to continue practising how to say “No” (without anyone in the group feeling bad).



# CARING SECRETS, HARMFUL SECRETS

## Duration

20—25 minutes.

## Resources

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 “caring (or protective) 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 “harmful (or hurtful) 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 kids 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 (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 from the rest of the group. The facilitator should ensure the criteria to classify into “caring secrets” and “harmful secrets” have been properly understood.
4. Ask the kids to give other examples in their everyday life of “caring secrets” and “harmful 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 “caring secrets” and “harmful 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.
- You can ask the kids to come up with ideas to improve the exercise, with whatever new variants they can think of.
- 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 mother is pregnant and 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 for my birthday, but I don’t know yet whether it will be A or B. Please don’t say anything until I see what they’ve given me.”</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>“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>“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 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>“X makes me kiss her/him when we collect the equipment.” (Physical expressions of affection should always be voluntary, never forced).</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.” (Kids should not keep secrets of adults from their family).</i></p>

GOOD SECRETS	BAD SECRETS
<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 is very upset because she hasn’t been picked. Go talk to her, but don’t make her talk about it if she doesn’t feel like it.”</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 kids 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 18 this is a dangerous message: kids have the right to talk about everything that goes on during practice, there is no justification to “keep tactics secret”).</i></p> <p><i>“X always comes into the changing room when I am taking a shower and I’ve noticed he/she watches me, which makes me feel really uncomfortable.” (Privacy at these ages is unquestionable and it should be guaranteed by other adults).</i></p> <p><i>“X has asked me to have sex, but I don’t want to, yet I don’t want to say anything because I don’t want the coach to think I’ve led him/her on.” (When somebody receives unwanted sexual requests, it is necessary to resort to adults to fix it).</i></p> <p><i>“X is vomiting his/her food and I don’t know what to do, but I don’t want to say anything because he/she may get angry with me.” (When something poses a health risk, you must tell someone about it until it has been properly addressed and treated).</i></p>



# WHAT STOPS YOU FROM TELLING?

## Duration

10—15 minutes.

## Resources

The usual space for sports practice.

## Objectives (messages worked on)

6 “Some secrets can hurt you”

But also:

2 “It’s not your fault”

3 “Sexual abuse is abuse of power”

10 “Ask for help”

## Method

1. Go over the key ideas of the activity “**Caring secrets, harmful secrets**” with the kids’ help: “*What can you remember from the activity we conducted on secrets? What have you been thinking about this?*”
2. Next, divide them into groups and ask them to consider situations based on the following question: “*Can you remember any situations in which other real or made up people have kept harmful secrets? Why do you think they kept the secrets?*” Each group will prepare a list of situations from films, TV series, the news... but not involving anyone in the group.
3. Gather all the kids again and ask each group to provide their examples. There will be cases in which the examples are not familiar to all, so ask each group to describe each situation in detail, and clarify the attribution of responsibility (Key Idea 2: “It’s not your fault”), manipulation of people (Key Idea 3: “Sexual abuse is abuse of power”) and that there is always the possibility of asking for help (Key Idea 10: “Ask for help”), with the participation of the other groups. Also explore the feelings of the people or characters mentioned, highlighting that feelings to keep quiet are usually related to fear, shame and guilt.
4. With each situation, consider whether not telling the harmful secret ended up being positive or negative (or to what extent it was positive or negative). It is important to stress that perpetrators manipulate through fear, shame and guilt to protect themselves, and that is why it is important to talk about unpleasant situations to adults you trust, to stop abuse and get out of the situation.

5. If there is a climate of trust in the group, you can ask some kids to share a situation in which they kept a harmful secret out of fear, shame or guilt, and what happened when they finally told it (normally it gets better, but if not managed properly, the situation may get worse and it is advisable to have arguments to discuss this).

## Evaluation

*“How did you feel when you discovered that fear, shame and guilt can make us keep secrets that will hurt us even more? What ideas will you remember to ask for help when you feel bad, even if you feel afraid, ashamed or guilty?”*

## Suggestions

- Working with fear, guilt and shame can trigger sensitivities. It is best to keep the discussion at an intellectual level of external and remote situations, unless all the kids show they would like to go into greater detail.





# “SPEAK UP” ASSEMBLY

## Duration

30—40 minutes.

## Resources

A space for having a quiet conversation. The kids should wear enough clothes to stay warm and be able to 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. Explain Key Idea 9: “Talk, think, decide and don’t keep quiet”, emphasising that it is important for them to share everything that happens to them in sports and to express their opinion. If they do participate and express their view, whenever there is something that is a risk, they will be able to identify it and ask for help.
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. Kids 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 is 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 kids 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.
- 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

The usual space for sports practice.  
Pens for all the kids. Sticky notes like Post-Its and a vertical surface to put them on (a wall, a board, a hanging cardboard...).

## 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. Propose a brainstorm based on the following question: “*What three things do you need to keep in touch with those who matter to you?*” Each kid will write each one on a separate sticky note.
3. Collect all the sticky notes and place them into categories. At these ages it is normal for kids to focus on new technologies, especially their telephone. Therefore, it is the facilitator’s responsibility to go back to the subject of physical contact with one’s family and friends, with arguments based on what was worked on previously: seeing someone face-to-face favours the biological part of “stomach” safety, respect for the body, and it helps detect indicators (in particular by adults), that can only be seen in person (skin colour, dark circles under your eyes, low energy, stress and irritability...).

## Evaluation

*“How did you feel when you discovered that keeping in touch is a real option? What people would you like to get back in touch with this week?”*

## Suggestions

- If you see a kid in a situation of social isolation, it is very high risk. That is why it is important to address this separately, providing strategies for them to make new friends within sports or other areas of their life, with the support of other reference adults.



# ASK FOR HELP!

## Duration

15–20 minutes.

## Resources

Four cardboard squares of the same colour, cut irregularly (and differently for each square) into nine pieces. Prepare four envelopes: in each one there will be six pieces of the same square and a piece from each one of the other three.

## Objectives (messages worked on)

10 “Ask for help!”

## Method

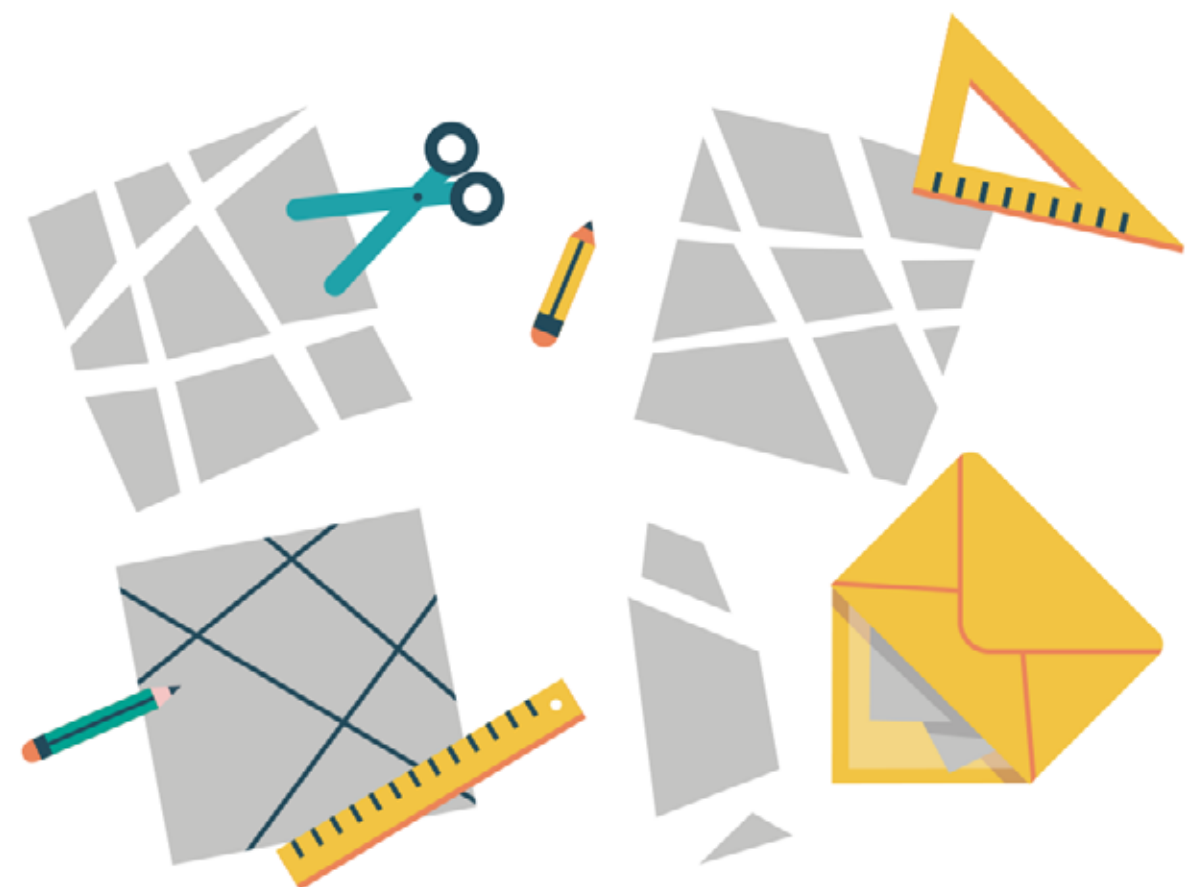
1. This activity does not start going over the key idea, but rather by saying: *“Let’s see how much you have learnt about what we have been doing in these activities.”*
2. Divide the kids into four groups and give each one an envelope with the following instructions: *“In silence, make a square with the pieces in the envelopes.”*
3. Let the kids try it and manage frustration about the pieces that do not fit. You can keep the tension going, provided it does not generate any conflict.
4. At some point they will realise there are pieces from different squares, and then they will try to work as a single team (and they will be allowed to do so, of course). With the pieces they have they cannot make a square, so they will need to ask other groups for pieces and offer them the ones they cannot use. This way, all the groups will end up forming a square, but they will have had to ask for help without speaking to the other mates.

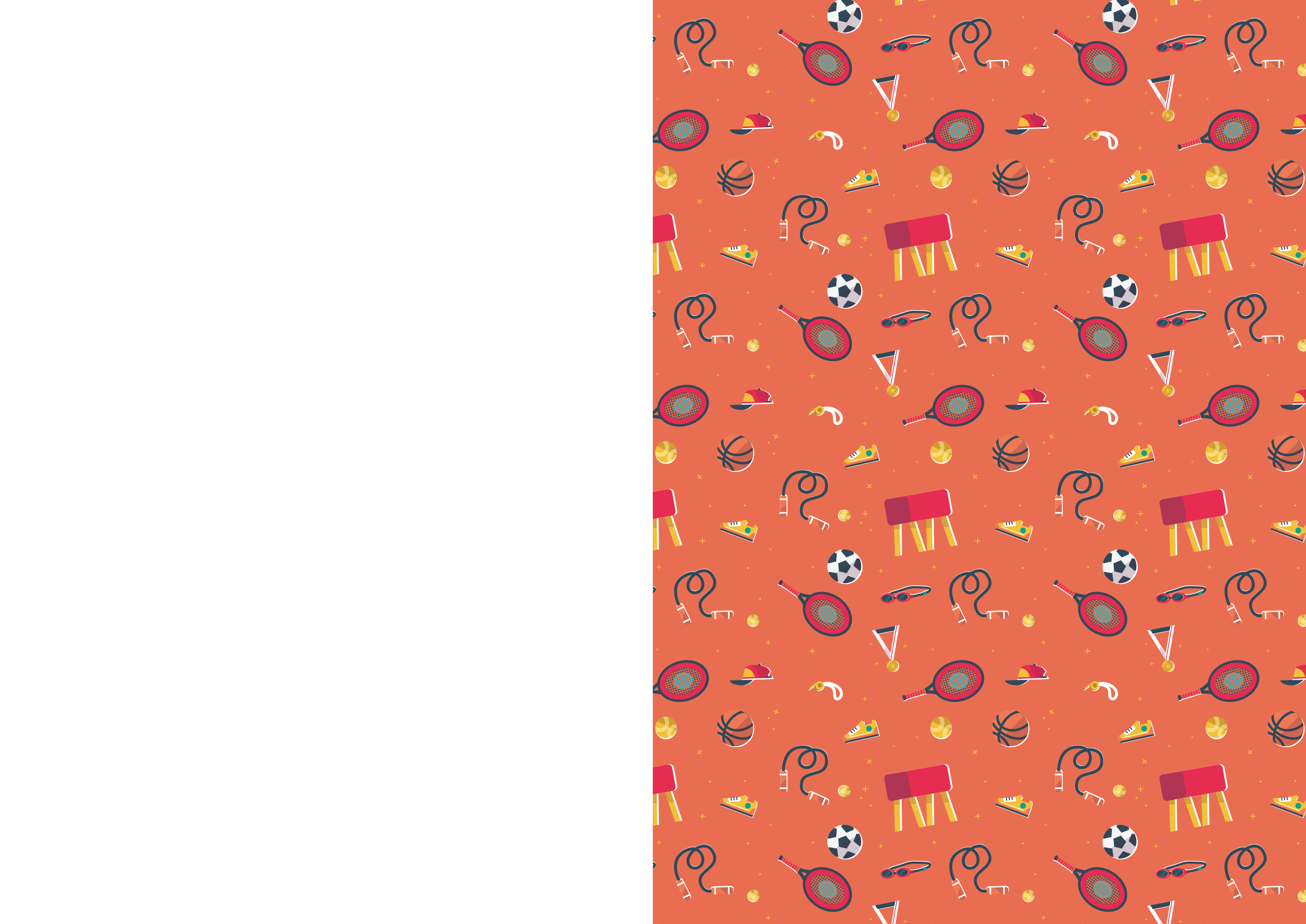
## Evaluation

*“How did you feel at the beginning, working only with the pieces in one envelope? And how about when you realised you could ask for help from the other groups? What was it like to ask for help without words? Does this happen in real life: you could ask for help from others and yet you don’t?”* Insist on the fact that there are problems we cannot fix on our own and asking for help is the best strategy to overcome them.

## Suggestions

- Depending on the size of the work groups (larger or smaller) and their dynamics, you can cut the squares into more or fewer pieces, and you can put more or fewer pieces of other squares in the envelopes (two pieces of each, for example).
- It is important to keep the sentence ambiguous: *“Make a square with the pieces in the envelopes”*, avoiding saying *“in one envelope”*, because then you can draw their attention to the fact that you never said that. From this we can deduce that we often limit ourselves, when in fact we could be asking for help from many more people than we think.
- This activity can be closed by going over all the key ideas, and how you can ask for help whenever there is something worrying about any one of them.







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