

Safety Superpowers: Understanding and Responding to Abuse

Materials Needed:

- Notebook or paper
- Pens or pencils
- Access to a computer or tablet with internet
- Whiteboard or large sheet of paper (optional, for brainstorming)
- A list of pre-approved, safe websites for research (see Activity 2)
- A list of national and local helpline numbers (e.g., Childline, NSPCC, or your country's equivalent)

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you (Ted) will be able to:

- Define what abuse is in your own words, including different forms like physical, emotional, and manipulation.
- Identify potential warning signs that you or a friend might be experiencing abuse.
- Understand that abuse is never the victim's fault.
- Create a personal safety plan that lists trusted adults and resources for help.

Lesson Activities

Part 1: Introduction - What is a Healthy Relationship? (10 minutes)

Goal: To start a safe conversation and understand your current thoughts on relationships and safety.

1. **Discussion Starter:** Let's talk about friendships. What makes a good friend? What does a healthy, happy friendship look and feel like? (*Examples: respectful, fun, trusting, feeling safe, being able to be yourself*).
2. **Transition Question:** Now, let's think about the opposite. What are some words you might use to describe a relationship (with a friend, family member, or anyone) that feels bad or unsafe?
3. **Teacher's Role:** Listen carefully and validate Ted's ideas. Write down key words on the whiteboard or paper. This will lead us into defining abuse.

Part 2: Defining Abuse - It's More Than Just Physical (20 minutes)

Goal: To answer "What types of abuse are there?" and introduce concepts like manipulation and coercive control in an age-appropriate way.

1. **Brainstorm:** Based on our first discussion, let's group these "bad feeling" behaviors into categories. The teacher will introduce the official names for these categories.
2. **Introducing the Types (Use simple definitions):**
 - **Physical Abuse:** This is when someone uses their body to hurt or control someone else.

Hitting, kicking, pushing. It's about causing physical harm.

- **Emotional/Verbal Abuse:** This is using words to hurt or control someone. It can be constant yelling, name-calling, insults, or making someone feel worthless. This is about hurting feelings and confidence.
- **Manipulation & Mind Games:** This is a sneaky type of emotional abuse. It's when someone tries to trick you into doubting yourself or doing things you don't want to do.
 - **Example:** "If you really cared about me, you would..." or "You're just being too sensitive, that's not what happened." (This is called gaslighting).
- **Coercive Control:** This is when someone creates a set of rules to control your life. It can feel like you have no freedom.
 - **Example:** Telling you who you can and can't be friends with, checking your phone without permission, or controlling what you wear.

3. **Key Message:** All of these behaviors are about one person having power and control over another in a harmful way. **It is never the victim's fault.**

Part 3: Research Mission - Spotting the Signs (20 minutes)

Goal: To answer "What does abuse look like?" and "How can I identify if I or a friend is being abused?" using safe internet resources.

1. **The Mission:** You are now a "Safety Detective." Your job is to visit some trusted websites to find clues, or "warning signs," of abuse.
2. **Trusted Websites (Teacher provides these):**
 - Childline (UK) - Excellent resources on different types of abuse.
 - Kids Helpline (Australia) - Information on family issues and abuse.
 - The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) (USA) - Resources on different trauma types.
 - *(Teacher should vet these and provide direct links to the relevant pages.)*
3. **Written Task:** In your notebook, create a table with two columns: "Type of Abuse" and "Possible Signs." As you research, fill in at least 2-3 signs for each type of abuse we discussed. Signs can be things you see in a person's behavior (like being withdrawn or having unexplained injuries) or things you hear them say.
4. **Discussion:** After the research, let's talk about what you found. Were any of the signs surprising to you?

Part 4: "A Friend in Need" - What Can I Do? (15 minutes)

Goal: To answer "What can I do about it?" by applying knowledge to realistic scenarios.

1. **Scenario Analysis:** We are going to read a couple of short stories about fictional characters. For each one, we will discuss:
 - What type of hurtful behavior might be happening?
 - What clues make you think that?
 - What are some safe ways you could help your friend?
2. **Scenario 1:** Your friend Sam used to love playing games online with the group, but recently has been dropping out of chats suddenly. When you ask why, Sam says, "My dad gets really angry if he hears me laughing. He says I'm being too loud and worthless." Sam also seems quiet and sad at school.
3. **Scenario 2:** Your friend Alex has a new partner who texts them constantly, asking where they are and who they are with. If Alex doesn't reply right away, the partner gets angry and says things like, "If you don't answer me, I'll tell everyone that secret you told me." Alex has stopped hanging out with you and other old friends.

4. **Focus of Discussion:** Emphasize that the goal is NOT to solve the problem for the friend, but to support them and help them connect with a **trusted adult**. Good ways to help include: listening without judgment, saying "I'm worried about you," and encouraging them to talk to a school counselor, teacher, or parent.

Part 5: My Safety Plan - A Guide for Myself and Others (15 minutes)

Goal: To create a practical, empowering tool that you can use or share.

1. **Creative Written Task:** Create a one-page "Personal Safety Plan" or "Friend's Helper Guide" in your notebook. Make it clear and easy to read. It must include:
 - **My Trusted Adults:** List at least 3-5 adults you trust and could talk to if you or a friend were worried or scared. (e.g., Parent, Aunt/Uncle, Teacher, older sibling, family friend).
 - **Safe Places:** List 2-3 places you could go if you ever felt unsafe at home (e.g., a trusted neighbor's house, the library, school).
 - **Helpline Numbers:** Write down the important helpline numbers the teacher provides.
 - **Helpful Phrases:** Write down 3 things you could say to a friend who you think is in trouble. (e.g., "I'm here for you," "What you're describing doesn't sound fair," "Do you want help talking to a trusted adult about this?").
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Conclusion & Review (5 minutes)

Let's quickly review the most important things we learned today:

- **Abuse has many forms,** not just physical. Words and control can be just as hurtful.
- **It is NEVER the victim's fault.** No one deserves to be abused.
- **Help is available.** The most important step is telling a trusted adult.
- You have the power to be a good friend and to keep yourself safe by knowing the signs and knowing who to talk to.

Do you have any final questions or thoughts about what we've discussed today?