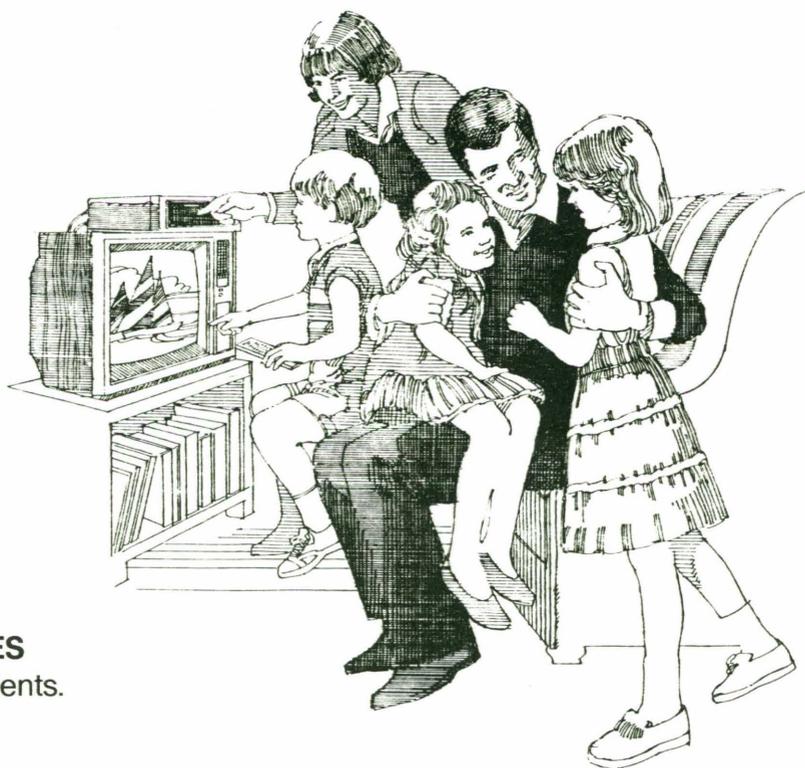


A 4-H/CRD Film Discussion Guide

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY: On Your Own At Home

No one is comfortable with the thought of young children at home alone, but everyone recognizes that circumstances often give a parent no alternative. A child alone at home must cope with extra responsibilities and with loneliness. How can we help keep children safe when they're alone? How can we help them learn where and when to get help? How can we help them see themselves as strong and resourceful in emergencies?

In the animated fairy tale setting of **ON YOUR OWN AT HOME**, a princess in her castle learns to handle the kinds of problems that come up when any child is alone at home — whether it is a lost key, a dragon at the door or on the phone, a fire in the scullery, or an accident. With the help of the king and queen, the princess demonstrates specific ways for parents and children to plan and practice together what to say and do to keep safe and when, where, and how to get help. Her reassuring story suggests a positive route to becoming self-reliant and develops a bond of empathy with parents who use the same problem-solving skills when they are alone.



INTENDED AUDIENCES

For primary grade students.

OBJECTIVES

- To realize that everyone needs to know how to keep safe when alone.
- To appreciate the importance of planning and role playing safe behavior with parents.
- To plan and practice ways of taking care of and using house keys.
- To plan and practice safe ways of checking out house or apartment security.
- To plan and practice safe ways to answer the door and the telephone.
- To plan and practice safe ways of acting in emergencies.
- To plan and practice what to do if lonely or afraid.
- To plan and practice ways of maintaining contact with parents.

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This film addresses the issue of children who spend significant amounts of time at home alone. It discusses parental concerns, children's fears, potential situations that can arise, as well as safety tips.

The film lets children know that when they are alone, problems will come up which they will need to handle. It advises them to make plans in advance. A number of situations are described, including:

If no adult will be home when the child comes home from school, the child should carry a key on a string. Also, a key should be left with a trusted neighbor.

A child should check his house to make sure everything appears normal; that a door which should be locked is, and that windows are not broken. Discuss a procedure to follow if something out of the ordinary occurs.

Phone numbers for parents, public safety officers, and trusted neighbors should be readily available to children.

Children need to be prepared to encounter strangers on the phone and at the door.

The film concludes by reassuring children that, with proper preparation, they will be able to handle situations which may arise whenever they are alone.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important to think ahead to what might happen when you are home alone? How is planning different from imagining that all kinds of things might go wrong?
2. Have you ever surprised yourself by discovering that you could handle a problem on your own? What did you do? How did you feel?
3. What if someone at the door or on the telephone asks you a question about yourself or your family? What can you do to help yourself if you feel pressured?
4. How do you feel if someone asks you for help? Is it more important to help or be safe? Can you think of ways you could help safely without opening the door to a stranger?
5. What would you do if you were home alone and a storm made the electricity go off? How could you plan for this type of emergency?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. An observation game
When you come home alone, do you think you can spot something if it's out of place, like an open window or a broken screen? Try playing a game where one person moves something to the wrong place in the room while everyone else closes their eyes. Can you spot what was changed?
2. A listening game
Noises made by familiar things often sound different when a person is alone. Being very quiet, listen for all the noises around you and tell what you think made them. Play this game at home with your parents too.

3. A “saying no” game

Can you say no to a stranger? Here’s a game for two people to play that will help you practice. Stand on either side of a closed door. The person outside the door pretends to be a stranger. The person inside pretends to be home alone. The person outside should try all sorts of things to get the person inside to open the door, such as being very friendly, getting angry and shouting, or asking you for help. The person outside should become more demanding each time the person inside responds.

4. An information game

Two people play the roles of a person making and a person receiving an emergency call. Others should be prepared to answer these questions: Was all the needed information given? Was it given in an order that made it easy for the person receiving the information? What kinds of questions did the person receiving the call need to ask?

5. A “what if” game

Make a plan with an adult for one of the following problems:

- a. WHAT IF you’ve lost your key and your neighbor isn’t home?
- b. WHAT IF a smoke detector alarm starts to sound?
- c. WHAT IF, during a thunderstorm, all the lights go off?
- d. WHAT IF you cut your hand and it won’t stop bleeding?

First, write a list of things you might do about the problem. Cross off the things that won’t really help, or aren’t safe to try. Then go over the list a second time, putting your things-to-do in order.

Coronet Film and Video

Length: 12 minutes

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Community Resource Development



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