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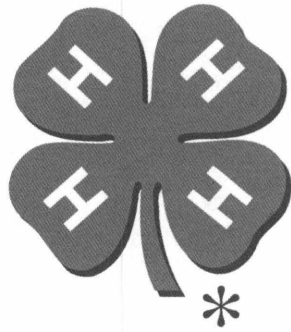


STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS



Parents' Guide

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Acknowledgments:

The Strong Families: Competent Kids program was originally developed by Extension Agents Nancy Pfafflin and Penny Risdom with the assistance of colleagues Bonnie Braun, Mary Johnson, Barbara Joseph, and Pat Southard.

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STRONG FAMILIES: Competent Kids

A Program About Children In Self-Care

Parents: Welcome To The Program!

The decision to leave a child in self-care is a serious and sometimes scary one...for both children and parents. The **Strong Families: Competent Kids** program has been developed by Virginia Cooperative Extension to offer education to families on the subject of children in self-care. It is the objective of this program to make both children and parents aware of the many issues that need to be considered when deciding to leave a child without adult supervision.

The program has both a youth and a parent component. The youth book is filled with real life situations that could occur when home alone, along with information on life skills that enable a child to cope with these situations. The child will gain an awareness of the many decisions a family will need to make together when considering self-care. In the parents book, the subject of self-care is discussed from your perspective. The issues discussed will parallel those in the youth book. It is most important that parents and children share their information, and to make sharing easier, the parents' book will have "reference boxes" at the top of it's pages. The "reference box" will refer you to the topic in the youth book which corresponds to the parent topic. You will want to discuss what you're learning with your child, engage the whole family in the activities in the parents book, and participate in the youth activities that require your assistance. Together you will gain much information about self-care, and you will find yourself prepared and ready to make an informed decision about leaving your child home alone.





STRONG FAMILIES: COMPETENT KIDS IS A 4-H PROGRAM OF VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

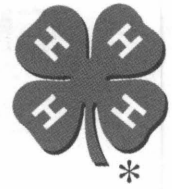
Strong Families:Competent Kids is sponsored by Virginia Cooperative Extension as a 4-H program. 4-H is the youth development program of the Virginia Cooperative Extension, and it is the largest volunteer-led, coeducational youth program in the world. For millions of members across America, involvement in 4-H means individual achievement, a challenging future, and a lifetime of service to community and country. The four H's of 4-H stand for head, heart, hands, and health. The 4-H motto is "To Make the Best Better." The goal of 4-H is developing life-skills.

Your vision of a 4-H member may be a rosy-cheeked farm child with a blue ribbon calf. You should know that today's 4-H ers are more likely to be suburbanites and urbanites participating in many exciting projects and programs: kids can make a rocket, use a computer, give a speech, conquer an obstacle course, perform in a play, go hiking and camping, learn smart shopping skills, raise an animal (even aguide dog), investigate a pond or marine habitat, or discover new and interesting places at home and abroad. And, best of all, 4-H puts kids in contact with new friends and good adult leaders.

As you look for meaningful involvements for your competent kids, consider 4-H. If you would like to know more about local opportunities for your 5- through 19-year olds, phone your local Cooperative Extension office.



IS YOUR CHILD READY FOR SELF-CARE?



Parents ask the question, “When is my child ready to be home alone?” The answer to this is different for each and every child. There is no magic age when a child is automatically ready for self-care. Local government agencies offer guidelines for appropriate ages and lengths of time for leaving a child home alone, but even if your child meets these guidelines, your child may not be ready. Perhaps, you have thought of leaving your child alone for just a few minutes while you run an errand or for a longer period of time before or after school. How will you decide when the time is right to allow your child to stay home alone?

Parents begin to think... What lifeskills does my child need to know? What emotional readiness should my child have? Researchers say two factors seem to be most important in successful self-care. These factors are: 1) Children should have a strong sense of how they should spend their time alone; and 2) Children should feel the presence of a parent - even if it is on the other side of a telephone. The checklist on the following page will be helpful to you in assessing the areas in which your child is competent for self-care and those areas that need work. You will want your child to be equipped with necessary life skills for self-care prior to being left alone.

If you make a decision for self-care, consider a trial period first. This will give you and your child an opportunity to evaluate “how it’s going.” Have you given your child more responsibility than he or she can handle? Is your child expressing more fears than before? Has your relationship stayed the same or gotten better or worse since self-care started? After asking these questions, you may feel that your decision for self-care has been a good one, or you may wish to explore the possibility of other options.

The **Strong Families: Competent Kids** program acknowledges the need for all children to be prepared with life skills necessary for self-care, even if not in a self-care situation. You will be given material that allows you and your child the opportunity to explore feelings about self-care, to assess your child’s readiness, and to prepare yourselves with practical information to cope with the reality of what life may be like when a child is home alone.

Remember... Completion of the **Strong Families: Competent Kids** program does not certify that a child is ready to be in self-care. That is a family decision! Should you decide your child is ready for a period of self-care, your challenge is to create a workable self-care plan for your family, and **Strong Families: Competent Kids** will help.

CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS WHEN CONSIDERING SELF-CARE

Read and Answer These Questions

Do you consider your home and your neighborhood safe environments for leaving your child in self-care?

YES _____ NO _____

Has your child expressed an interest in being left in self-care?

YES _____ NO _____

Does your child know this information... name, address, phone number ?

YES _____ NO _____

Do you consider your child old enough to assume self-care responsibilities ?

YES _____ NO _____

Do you consider your child old enough to make good choices in managing time?

YES _____ NO _____

Do you and your child communicate well about feelings, both negative and positive?

YES _____ NO _____

Can your child walk home from school by himself/herself ?

YES _____ NO _____

Is your child able to be responsible for a house key to lock and unlock doors?

YES _____ NO _____

Is your child able to use the telephone for routine situations as well as emergency ones?

YES _____ NO _____

Is your child able to identify emergency situations and act in an appropriate manner?

YES _____ NO _____

Is your child able to consistently act in a safe manner when left alone?

YES _____ NO _____

Are there adults that your child might be able to contact if needed?

YES _____ NO _____

Has your child stayed home alone for a short time and felt good about it?

YES _____ NO _____

Is your child able to fix a snack?

YES _____ NO _____

Does your child follow the rules of the family? YES _____ NO _____

Does your child follow instructions? YES _____ NO _____

Will your child be in self-care with siblings? YES _____ NO _____

If your child is in self-care with siblings, are they able to get along, resolving conflicts as needed? YES _____ NO _____

Is your child able to complete homework and chores with minimum supervision? YES _____ NO _____

Can your child resist the influence of friends if asked to do something against your family rules? YES _____ NO _____

Is your child afraid to be left alone? YES _____ NO _____

Can your child reach you by phone when home alone? YES _____ NO _____

Do you know the local regulations regarding what constitutes child neglect? YES _____ NO _____

PARENTS: Look at your answers. If you have answered "YES" to a question, this is an area in which your child is mastering a life skill associated with readiness for self-care. If you have answered "NO" to a question, this is a life skill area that needs work. The **Strong Families: Competent Kids** program will give you the information needed to teach and reinforce these needed life skills for self-care.



PARENTS: Be Aware That Children Face Challenges When In Self-Care !

Here are four areas in which your child will face challenges when in self-care. Read over these challenges. These are topics that will be addressed in this program.

SAFETY

Safety risks increase when children are unsupervised. Children need instruction in avoiding accidents and coping with emergency situations.

EMOTIONAL

Feelings of loneliness, boredom, fear, rejection, and insecurity can be present for the child in self-care. Children need skills to help them cope with these feelings and replace them with more positive emotions.

PEER PRESSURE

Peers can place pressure on children to act in ways that are beyond the rules. Children need self-confidence to say "no" to friends who try to persuade them to do things they know are inappropriate. This inappropriate behavior includes breaking house rules, as well as acts of juvenile delinquency, acts of violence, and alcohol and drug abuse.

INCREASED RESPONSIBILITY

Chores, care of siblings, phone calls, emergency situations, etc., can put more responsibility on children when they are in self-care. Children need much direction in order to take on the added responsibility.

What Will Your Child Need To Know When In Self-Care?

Below is a list of topics covered in the youth book. Your parent book addresses these same topics, so you and your child will have common ground for discussions regarding self-care.

Topics To Be Covered:

1. Guidelines for a family meeting and establishing family rules.
2. Rules of key safety
3. How and when to use the telephone when home alone.
4. What to do when a stranger comes to the door.
5. How to avoid danger from a stranger.
6. How to have a safe home.
7. How to identify an emergency.
8. How to act in emergency situations.
9. What to do in case of fire.
10. What to do in a medical emergency.
11. What to do in a weather emergency.
12. How to communicate feelings about being home alone.
13. How to cope with loneliness and boredom
14. How to plan time when home alone.
15. How to cope with fears and worries.
16. How to work together as a family.
17. How to get along with brothers and sisters when home alone.
18. How to know what a friend is and how to be a friend.
19. How to cope with peer pressure
20. How to make healthy food choices.

Your child will be directed to share from his or her book with you. Share what you personally want your family's response to be in each and every situation. This communication of information will do much to prepare your child to be resourceful, responsible, and reliable.



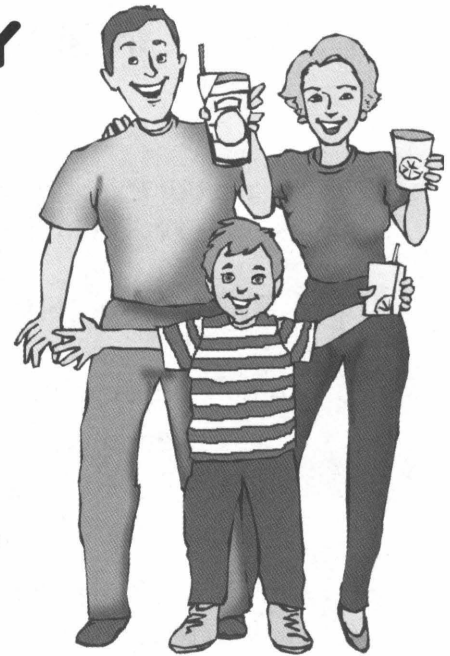
Family Activity:



Activity 1. Show your child the parent book, and communicate that you, also, will be learning the Strong Families: Competent Kids program. Ask your child to share what he or she is doing in class. Let your child know that you'll be excited to hear what he or she is learning.

WHAT MAKES A FAMILY STRONG ?

Having a strong family gives confidence to each family member, and that confidence is needed if a child is going to be home alone. A family is a group of people who depend on and are responsible to one another. Each family is unique in make-up and in character. Your family is particularly special just because it is "your family." Most of us live a fast paced lifestyle and the pressures of life are demanding. A strong family can give support to each member in encountering everyday life responsibilities and stresses. How can we work toward keeping our family strong? What are the qualities of a strong family? Try to put these qualities into practice!



QUALITIES OF A STRONG FAMILY

STRONG FAMILIES DO MANY THINGS TOGETHER.

* They play together, work together, eat together. It's not a smothering, exclusive, stifling togetherness. Rather, it's spending time together that builds a good relationship... when mutual sharing and learning happens. Finding that time to spend together doesn't just happen; strong families make it happen!

STRONG FAMILIES HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER.

* If a family member needs help, the family is there! The priceless gift of friendship and commitment is given. Members of strong families show and say their feelings of affection, praise, and encouragement. Support is unconditional, not dependent on an individual's abilities, successes, or failures. Strong families perceive themselves as a worthy group and members are proud to be counted as family. Strong families treasure family legends and traditions and are proud of what makes their clan unique.

STRONG FAMILIES COMMUNICATE.

* Members of strong families share their feelings, concerns, and interests. They talk about the trivial or the deep and profound. They practice a style of communication that is clear and open and encourages individuals to take responsibility for their feelings, thoughts, and actions. They seem to say to each other, "I respect you enough to listen to what you say, I respect you as a person."

STRONG FAMILIES HAVE THE ABILITY TO DEAL WITH CRISES AND TOUGH SITUATIONS AND STRESS IN A POSITIVE MANNER.

* They help and support one another, but they are also willing to seek outside help if there's something they don't know how to handle. Strong families are connected to other individuals and institutions (schools, churches, and local organizations) on whom they can depend for emotional and practical support.

*** STRONG FAMILIES CAN MAKE GOOD DECISIONS TOGETHER.**

They use techniques for solving problems that encourage everyone to be responsible and participate. They share power and decision making among parents and children. When parents make and enforce rules, the reasons for those actions are communicated clearly. Because there is an atmosphere of mutual respect in strong families, decisions are made that everyone can live with. And when everyone has participated in making the rules, compliance becomes a non-issue.

*** STRONG FAMILIES EXPRESS A LOT OF APPRECIATION FOR EACH OTHER.**

They make each other feel good about themselves and they do so every day! A basic need for any person is to be appreciated and to be needed. Some families have a ritual of saying one good thing about each person every day.

FAMILIES NEED FAMILY RULES

When the time comes for children to be left home alone, the first order of business is to establish and communicate family rules. These family rules need to be followed by the child when home alone and parents are not present to enforce them. Parents are unable to know everything that goes on when they are not with their children, so it is important to enlist the support of their children to build a set of rules that can be adhered to in their parent's absence. Working together to create the rules and the consequences for breaking the rules helps to create a set of family expectations for behavior. These rules will help create the guidelines needed for a safe self-care environment.

In your child's book, there is a suggested list of rules entitled, "Rules For Self-Care." This list can serve as a guide as you make your family list of rules.

What Will Your Family's Rules Be?

Ask yourself these questions:

When My Child Is Home Alone...

1. Is my child allowed to go outside?
2. What kitchen appliances can my child use?
3. Is my child allowed to take a bath or shower?
4. Can my child take the dog for a walk ?
5. Is my child allowed to have friends over?
If yes, what are the rules for having friends over?
6. What are the phone rules?
7. What chores are to be done daily?
8. What is my child's "check-in" plan?
9. How much TV is my child allowed to watch?
10. What adults can my child call on for help?



GUIDELINES FOR MAKING FAMILY RULES



Make rules reasonable and don't make too many.

* Don't expect a 10-year old to clean the entire house, but dusting and vacuuming his or her room might be a reasonable request. Too many rules are difficult to enforce and hard to remember.



Clearly state rules.

* Give child specific information about the rule. For example, don't tell a child not to eat a snack too close to dinner and not to eat junk food. Instead, give a child a list of snack foods, and tell him/her to choose a snack from this list and eat it before 4:00.



Explain reason for rules.

* Good rules have good reasons. If a child understands the reason for the rule, he/she is more likely to abide by the rule and not oppose it. A child who is given explanations has understanding that can lead to his or her own self-regulated discipline, rather than blind obedience to the demands of others.



Offer positive reinforcement for following the rule.

* Establishing positive incentives for good behavior always makes following the rules easier. State rules positively with incentives built in. For example, "When you finish your homework you may watch T.V. for a half hour."



Clearly state consequences for infractions of the rule.

* Negative consequences may be needed when rules are not followed. Make the consequences closely tied to the situation and enforce them as soon as possible to the infraction of the rule. For example, if a child breaks the rule about cleaning up after making a snack, the child will have to wash and dry the dinner dishes, rather than just wash them as usual.



Be consistent in enforcing rules.

* Check to make sure rules have been followed each day. Praise your child often for living by family rules. Enforce consequences consistently for broken rules.



Involve your child in establishing rules when appropriate.

* Families who work together to establish rules will work together to live by the rules.



Write down and post family rules.

* Seeing family rules in print, and having them posted where they can be seen, gives the family rules the importance they deserve. Everyone can consult this list if there is any question about any rule.

HAVE A FAMILY MEETING !

Now you are ready to talk about “family rules” with the family. Have a family meeting! The family meeting creates an opportunity for all family members to come together as a unit and express grievances, share values, ask questions, make plans, express desires, and take part in family decisions. Although the family meeting is a good idea for any family, it is particularly useful for families where both parents work outside of the home. The meeting schedules family time on a regular basis and keeps the lines of communication open.

Guidelines for a Family Meeting

1. Invite everyone in the family to the meeting.
2. Have a regularly scheduled meeting time.
3. Have an agenda for the meeting.
4. Treat everyone respectfully; let everyone be heard.
5. Talk about the good things happening in the family.
6. Include planning for family fun.
7. Have a time limit for the meeting and stick to it.
8. Keep a record of decisions made and post it.



Don'ts For The Family Meeting

1. Don't meet only to handle crises.
2. Don't skip meetings or change times.
3. Don't allow one member to dominate.
4. Don't fail to listen to and encourage each other.
5. Don't focus on complaints and criticisms.
6. Don't meet only to assign jobs or hand out punishments.
7. Don't go beyond your set meeting time limit.
8. Don't fail to implement the family's decisions.

Remember: A family meeting does not mean that parents are bound by what their children want. It does mean all family members have an opportunity to be heard. Some rules, like those about safety, will be “absolute” rules and non-negotiable. Other rules will be suitable for open discussion in which your child has input. Rules that are discussed, understood and jointly developed are more likely to be followed.

A regularly scheduled family meeting can help parents get a realistic picture of how the self-care situation is working out. Family meetings will provide the opportunity for families to bond, communicate, and support one another. Your family meetings will have a unique character of their own, because your family is unique.



Family Activities:



Activity 1. Schedule a family meeting. Keep in mind the guidelines of an effective family meeting. At this first meeting, discuss what family meetings are about. Ask someone to take notes. Initiate a discussion about your family's rules and expectations. Plan and schedule your next meeting together.

*Put notes from your family meetings in a "Family Information Notebook."
Learn how to make one below.*

MAKE A FAMILY INFORMATION NOTEBOOK

A "Family Information Notebook" is a great way to keep much-needed family information in one central location. Throughout your parent book, you will be told to put information in your "Family Information Notebook." Here are some hints for creating your notebook:

Materials Needed:

- Large looseleaf notebook
- Looseleaf notebook paper
- Divider pages
- pencil, pens

Organize your notebook with these topics on your divider pages. Add your own topics!

1. Basic Family Rules
2. Minutes from Family Meetings
3. Checklists
4. Key Care
5. Answering the Door
6. The Telephone
7. Fire Safety
8. First Aid and Medical
Emergency
9. Weather Emergency
10. Family Schedules
11. Recipes

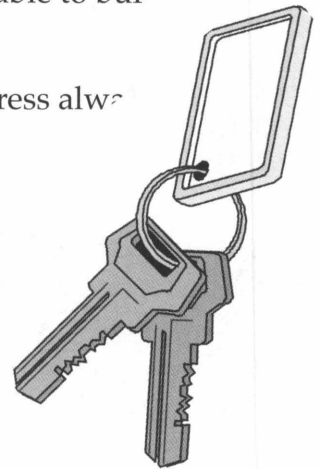
KEY CARE

As adults, we realize how upsetting it is to lose our car keys, lock them inside our car, lose our house key, or leave the key inside the house and lock ourselves out. Misplacing a key can interrupt our entire day and cause a great dilemma. Children face the same prospect of a key dilemma when in self-care. A child must keep track of a house key and know what to do if the key is lost.

How can you prepare your child for the great responsibility of a house key?

Here are some “KEY” ideas:

1. Teach your child to properly care for the key. Review the rules for key safety in the youth book. Stress keeping the key in a safe place, where it is not prominently displayed so that others will not know your child goes home to an empty house. If a key is worn, it is to be worn inside the clothing.
2. Do not put name and address on the key. This makes your house vulnerable to burglary.
3. Teach your child to properly lock and unlock the locks of your home. Stress always removing the key from the lock and returning it to a safe place.
4. Have a back-up plan for the time when your child loses or misplaces the key. Leave an extra key with a neighbor. Do not hide a key outside, as a thief could watch and learn the hiding place.
5. Have a second back-up plan in case key is lost and neighbor is not at home. Should your child call you? Will your child need to carry money for a pay phone call?
6. Teach your child to be alert when returning home to an empty house. If anything looks unusual, such as an opened window, an unlocked door, or a pried-open door, your child should go immediately to a neighbor’s house and call the police.



Family Activities:



Activity 1. Take your child on a lock and key tour of your home. Practice locking and unlocking each door. When you do give your child a house key, mark the top of the key with fingernail polish, so the child will know which way to insert key.



Activity 2. As a family, create a checklist of the doors that need to be kept locked in your home. Don't forget garage doors. Put this check list in your “Family Information” notebook under “Family Key Safety.”



Activity 3. Create your “back-up plans” for what to do in case of a lost key. Write these plans in your “Family Information” notebook.

THE TELEPHONE - THE LINK BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR CHILD

The telephone is that link between parent and child that allows the child to feel the parent's caring presence even when the parent is not physically there. Calls to parents can provide answers to questions and reassurance. Should an emergency arise, the phone provides immediate contact with adults who can help. Compile a list of people your child can call when needed. Give your phone number at work to at least one of your neighbors.

Remember that the phone can also be a source of fear. Obscene phone calls and questioning by strangers can sometimes frighten children who are home alone. Children who improperly give out information may be placing themselves at risk for assault or theft. For all of these reasons, it is essential that children have access to emergency phone numbers, know how to make emergency calls, and know how to respond appropriately to callers.

Your child needs the telephone to:

1. Call parent to check-in when arriving home if in after school self-care.
2. Call 911 in case of emergency
3. Call parent or designated adult when needed.
4. Let parent know when there is a change in plans.

You need the telephone to:

1. Check on your child for peace of mind.
2. Give your child words of encouragement or comfort
3. Give your child directions and information
4. Let your child know of any change in schedule.

The Answering Machine may be used by:

You - to leave messages for child upon arriving home. Messages may include important information and expressions of care, concern, and love.

Your child(children) - if you wish them to screen phone calls.



Family Activities:

To Prepare Child For Using The Telephone:



Activity 1. Parents and child practice operating telephones and answering machines in the home. Your child needs to memorize the home phone number, including the area code. If you have "call waiting," caller ID, or any other phone options, does your child know how to use them?



Activity 2. Establish a check-in procedure if your child is in self-care after school. Have your child memorize your work number, agree to call you on time, call if

there is any change in schedule, and give you a list of friends and their phone numbers so you can call them in case you do not hear from your child. Requiring a check-in call tells your children you care about him or her every day. Write your "check in" plan in your "Family Information" notebook.



Activity 3. Establish together the family rules for telephone use. Write them in the "Family Information" book. Remember to decide on time limits for conversations with friends, how to answer the call of a stranger, good times to call a parent at work, how to call a parent at work, etc. Teach child to use phrases like, "Please let me take a message and my mother will call you back when she is not busy," when a stranger calls. Have your child pretend to make some phone calls to friends, call a parent at work, or call and leave a message for a parent at work.



Activity 4. Prepare list of emergency numbers. Use the form in the youth book. Make sure your list includes at least two other persons that the child may contact - such as neighbors or relatives. Post this list close to the telephone. Place a copy of these numbers in the "Family Information" notebook.

Talk about the emergency situations that could occur. Teach your child the following information- name, address, phone number, directions to the home. A 911 operator will need this information. Tell your child to stay on the line with the 911 operator until the operator tells him or her to hang up. Take note: 911 operators have a TDD machine to communicate with the hearing impaired. This is a machine where you can type back and forth to the caller to obtain information. 911 operators also have access to a language line in order to communicate with persons who speak another language. Engage your child in role play. Act out emergency situations that might occur. Take turns being the 911 operator and the child.

Important Idea: Stay as calm as possible in an emergency situation and speak calmly and clearly.



Activity 5. Establish a "message taking center" in your home. Stock the center with pencils, pens, and a notepad with "fill-in-the-message" information.



Activity 6. Pretend someone has made a scary prank phone call saying things that are not good to hear. Show your child what to do. Instruct your child to hang up immediately. You may want your child to call you if something like this happens.



Activity 7. Your child's book has phone answering safety tips. Review these with your child. Do the "What Would You Say?" page in the youth book together.



Activity 8. Make a plan for what to do if your phone is out of order. Ideas are in the youth book.

Remember: You will help your child gain confidence using the telephone when you role-play many possible telephone situations. This practice will train your child to respond when the actual phone call comes in.

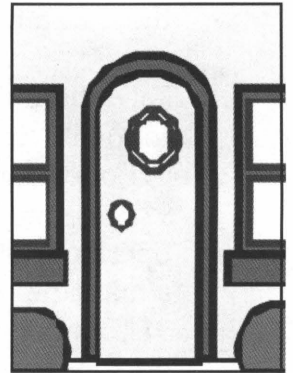
ANSWERING THE DOOR

Your child will need to know what procedure you want followed when there's a knock at the door. Your child should not open the door for anyone who is not on their "Safe Persons" list. This is a list of trusted friends and family members that your child could welcome into your home when you are not there. If someone comes to the door who is not on the "Safe Persons" list, your child needs to know what to say when you are not at home.

Tell your child not to be embarrassed by not letting someone into the home, and not to be persuaded to open that door for anything. Should a stranger be persistent, instruct your child to call for help. Stress that if the adult at the door is asking for help, the child should not feel obliged to assist. In such a case, the child may call another adult to help. Never should the adult be allowed into the home.

The youth book has the following suggested procedure:

1. Keep the door locked always.
2. Do not open the door.
3. Ask, "Who is it?" through locked door.
4. Never say you are home alone.
5. Tell delivery person to leave packages outside.
6. Never let a stranger inside, even in case of emergency.



Family Activities:



Activity 1. Make a "Safe Persons" list.



Activity 2. Make family rules for answering the door when child is home alone. Write these rules in your "Family Information" book.

REMEMBER: *Your child has been taught to respect and obey adults, so he or she may feel obliged to do what an adult says to do. Impress upon your child that he or she is not to do what a stranger says, just because this person is an adult. This person is a stranger and could cause the child harm.*

STRANGER SAFETY

The worst fear of parents is that their child will be abducted by a stranger. Here are ideas for family "stranger safety" education.

MOST IMPORTANT:

- Tell your child that anyone they do not know very well is a stranger.
- Go over the rules about "stranger safety" again and again with your child.

Stranger Safety Rules

Instruct your child when walking home from school, playing outside, or when in self-care that he or she should...

1. Keep away from strangers.
2. Never talk to strangers.
3. Never go anywhere alone.
4. Never go anywhere with a stranger.
5. Never do what a stranger says.
6. Never take anything from a stranger.
7. Scream "This is not my mother/father!" if a stranger grabs him or her.
8. Look for someone he or she can trust and get help if a stranger approaches.

More Hints To Give Your Child:

- Encourage your child to always tell you when he/she is uncomfortable around a person. Ask your child what the person did that made him or her uncomfortable.
- Teach your child to be observant at all times.
- Instruct your child to try to remember the license plate number of the person's car and other facts about the person and the car, if a stranger approaches or grabs someone else.. What color was the car? What can be remembered about the person... man?, woman?, hair color? kind of clothing? anything that can help identify this stranger.



Family Activities:



Activity 1. Write your Stranger Safety Rules in your "Family Information" book. Use the rules in your book and add your own.



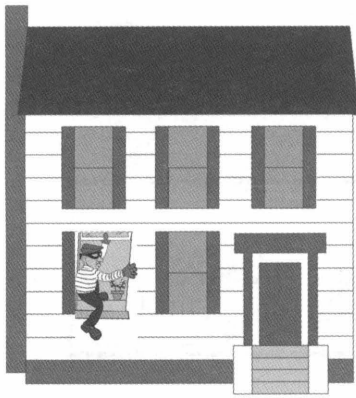
Activity 2. Play the Stranger Safety Game in the youth book with your child to reinforce safety rules. This game has some good examples of situations that could occur.



Activity 3. Review the Stranger Safety Word Search page in the youth book with your child for further reinforcement.



Activity 4. Create some "What If" scenarios involving strangers, and ask your child what he or she would do. Tell your child you are going to act like a dangerous stranger, and you want him/her to react safely. Give examples of how a stranger might try to trick a child ... offer child a treat, show child a cute animal, say that a parent is sick. Talk about unsafe ways to handle the stranger situation, and what could happen. End by talking about and acting out the best way to handle the situation. Make sure your child knows that he or she is not powerless in a dangerous situation, when he or she knows what to do.



IS YOUR HOME SAFE?

You want your home to be a safe place for your child, especially when home alone. The Safe Home Check List in the youth book will take your family on a walking tour throughout your home looking for possible safety risks. Use this check list to start a discussion about fixing up any area of your home that poses potential risk.

The check list will be a basis for your talking about how each of you as a family member must act in a safe and responsible manner in the home to prevent accidents. You will want to remind your child that your home is only as safe as your family makes it. Throughout this program, you and your child will be getting information about precautionary safety behavior.



Family Activities:



Activity 1. As a family, tour your home with the Safe Home Check List, found in the youth book. Discuss the list and make any corrections that are needed. Put the "Safe Home Check List" in your "Family Information" notebook for a future "safe home" recheck.



Activity 2. Walk around the neighborhood with your child. As you walk, point out areas that you think are unsafe and would like him or her to avoid.








Activity 3. If your child walks to school, take a walk together and trace the route to and from school. Look for any areas you want your child to be cautious of and talk about the safety precautions you would like your child to take when passing through these areas.

Emergencies Can Happen!

As parents, you always feel responsible for your children, even when you are not with them. That is why you need to prepare them for the unexpected when home alone.

Remember: Failure to prepare is preparation for failure.

What Should Your Child Know:

-  Discuss what constitutes an emergency - the kind of emergency that needs emergency attention. An emergency exists when someone is injured or is in danger, or if serious property damage is possible.
-  Make sure your child knows the difference between an *emergency* and a *non-emergency*. A non-emergency is the kind of problem your child can handle or one that can be solved when you return home. The youth book helps determine what an emergency is and is not.
-  There are also mini-emergencies which can be dealt with by the child if they have the appropriate life skills training. You and your child will be more secure with self-care if your child knows how to react in all of these situations.
-  Help your child by imagining all types of emergency scenarios. The youth book is filled with “What if” situations that require problem solving. After discussing each situation with your child, help to clarify the very best way to cope with the problem. This will help open the child’s mind to many situations that require this good judgment, and it is this good judgment that needs to be developed. Your child will become acquainted with situations that require immediate action and will know how to take action to remain safe. Acting out the situation with your child allows him/her to “try on” the solution and see if it makes good sense. Should the problem occur in real life, your child will put the right course of action into play!
-  Continue to emphasize the importance of using the telephone correctly to make the emergency phone call. The emergency phone list is to be posted near the phone, and your child should be drilled on giving correct emergency information. Emergencies such as fire, gas leaks, and burglaries should be reported from a trusted neighbors phone. Review your child’s book on emergency phone preparedness. These preparations can save valuable time when seconds count.



Family Activities:



Activity 1. Review the pages in the youth book about emergencies. Read the “Make A Choice” situations together and talk about maxi, mini, or non-emergencies that could occur in your family.



Activity 2. Make an emergency kit for your home. Instructions are in the youth book.



Activity 3. Take a tour of your home to show your child how to turn off the water in your home in case a pipe leaks or a faucet breaks. Show your child what to do when a toilet overflows.

FIRE EMERGENCY

Every year, more than 1,200 children are killed by home fires--90% of them in homes without working smoke detectors. Fire and burns are the second-leading cause of accidental death among children. When we think about leaving children home alone, we need to take every precaution so they won't start a fire or get burned in one.

Children start fires or become victims of fire most often because they aren't informed and prepared. They need to respect fire and know what to do in a fire emergency. A parent should not presume that a child has any innate sense of the danger or consequences of fire!

Children are naturally curious about fire and may get into "fire play" when home alone because they're bored and unsupervised--a lethal combination! Having easy access to matches and lighters makes starting fires easy. We need to teach them --early and often--about "good" and "bad" fires, about how not to set a fire, and how to survive one.

Preparing your child to deal with a fire emergency is a number one priority for self-care safety and your peace of mind. The youth book contains many fire safety rules. Go over these with your child and take an active part in the activities below.



Family Activities:



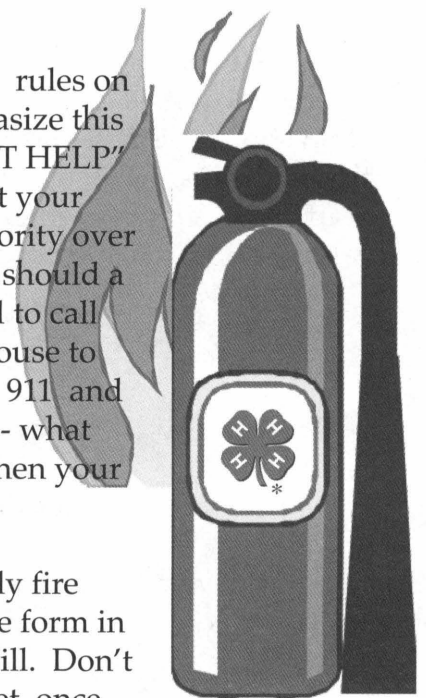
Activity 1. Complete the Fire Hazards Safety Checklist on the next page as a family as you conduct a home fire hazard hunt. Put the check list in your "Family Information" notebook to use in a recheck.



Activity 2. Review life-saving emergency fire safety rules on the "In Case Of Fire" page in the youth book. Emphasize this rule as most important: "GET OUT, STAY OUT, GET HELP" if there is any hint of smoke or fire in your home. Let your child know that human safety is the number one priority over any possessions- even a pet. Under no circumstance should a child try to put out a fire, even a small one. Tell child to call for help once out of the house. Go to a neighbor's house to call fire and rescue. Have your child practice dialing 911 and review the information he or she will have to report - what happened, address, name and telephone number. Then your child should call you.



Activity 3. Schedule a family meeting to plan a family fire escape route. Make two routes. Map the route on the form in the youth book. Practice the route in a family fire drill. Don't forget to include where family members should meet once they leave the home in the event of fire. This is important, so everyone in the house knows if the others made it out safely. Put this page in your "Family Information" notebook and post a copy in a prominent spot in your home.





Activity 4. Play “What If.” Talk about fire emergencies that could happen in your home. Talk or act out what you should do. Read the fire safety stories in the youth book for more “what if” situations.



Activity 5. Complete the Family Fire Help Sheet in the parent book and include it in your Family Information notebook.



Activity 6. Review the Fire Prevention Puzzle in the youth book. This puzzle teaches good fire prevention rules.

FIRE HAZARDS SAFETY CHECK LIST

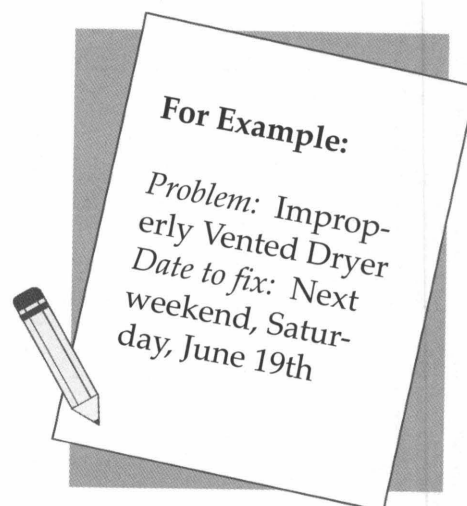
Walk around the house and do this check list as a family. When you find a hazard, discuss why it might cause a fire, and discuss how to eliminate this hazard from your home.

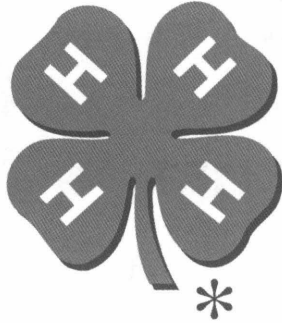
How Many Hazards Do You Have?

- ___ Electrical outlets with more than two plugs
- ___ Stacks of magazines or newspapers, especially those stored close to a heat source
- ___ Curtains hanging close to a stove, heater or, fireplace
- ___ Improperly vented clothes dryer; check to see if the lint screen is working
- ___ Matches within reach of young children
- ___ Fire extinguisher several years old that may be ineffective (Check the date)
- ___ Fireplace without a good screen or door
- ___ Worn electrical wiring or cords
- ___ Smoke alarms that have dead batteries
- ___ Containers of flammable liquids such as gasoline, kerosene, oil
- ___ Other dangerous liquids such as paint, paint thinner, varnish
- ___ Greasy areas around the kitchen stove

Plan For Repairs !

Now that you’ve completed the checklist, begin your plan for repairs.





Family Fire Help Sheet

Our Family's Fire Rules:
(Get Out, Stay Out, Get Help!)

Emergency Number For Fire _____

Fire Exit Plan 1

Fire Exit Plan 2

Our Meeting Place Outside _____

Location of Smoke Alarms _____ Dates Checked _____



THE MEDICAL EMERGENCY



When you are away from your child, it is important for you to feel like your child is ready to cope with any major medical emergency as well as the usual minor scrapes and scratches.

Points To Remember:

- * Be mindful of things in the home that could hurt your child like knives, tools, firearms, medications, alcohol, poisons.
- * Teach children to read labels and to know what is poisonous.
Look for words that mean danger: caution, poison, danger, warning, hazard
Point out the skull and crossbones symbol.
- * Make sure children have clear instructions about what they can use in the kitchen and what is "off limits."
- * Keep a well stocked first-aid kit, and teach your child to care for minor scrapes and cuts.
- * Keep emergency numbers accessible to child.
- * Go over emergency first-aid instruction. Consider taking a Red Cross class with your child.
- * Teach your child that these are considered medical emergencies:
 1. A person is bleeding heavily
 2. A person stops breathing
 3. A person has swallowed poison
 4. A person is badly burned
 5. A person has a broken bone
 6. A person has great pain in some part of the body
 7. A person is unconscious
- * Go over these "Dos and Don'ts."
 1. Do not move a person because you may hurt him/her more.
 2. If the person is lying down and vomiting, turn the head to the side so he/she will not choke
 3. If the person is bleeding, apply pressure over the wound using a clean bandage and lift the bleeding part above the chest to slow the bleeding.
 4. Cover the person with a blanket to keep him/her from losing body heat.
 5. Loosen tight clothing to make the injured person comfortable.





Family Activities:



Activity 1. Review all the first-aid procedures in the youth book. Talk about any special first-aid procedures your family needs to follow for special health problems.



Activity 2. Make a first-aid kit for the home. Make one for the car as well. Instructions for this are in the youth book. Place the first-aid kit in a place where everyone in the family has access.



Activity 3. Review the “What If...” situations in the youth book. This will start some good discussion in your family about what to do when a medical problem arises.

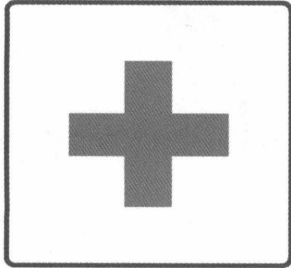


Activity 4. Review the Safety and First-Aid Crossword Puzzle in the youth book. It is filled with rules for safety and first aid.



Activity 5. Fill out the Family Medical Help Sheet in the parent book. Include this in your “Family Information” notebook.





Family Medical Help Sheet

Emergency Number For Serious Injuries

Stay away from these dangerous things in our home:

What we do for a minor injury:

People who are close by and can be called if you are sick or have an injury.

Special notes about medicines or family allergies or conditions.

Special family rules when someone is sick

Doctor's name and phone number

THE WEATHER EMERGENCY





The threat of severe weather conditions causes excitement for everyone, and especially to a child in self-care. How will your child react in the event of snowstorm, blizzard, ice storm, thunderstorm, tornado, lightning, flash flood or hurricane? Weather changes can sometimes occur quickly, and your child will need to know how to react to the emergency situation. Your child's anxiety may be increased when inclement weather causes you to arrive home later than usual. You can alleviate some of this anxiety by calling home as soon as you hear of severe weather to inform your child that you might be home later than usual. You will also want to give reminders of proper safety measures for that particular weather emergency. Remember that in cases of bad weather the phone lines are often down and you may not be able to reach your child, so it is necessary to be prepared ahead of time.


Ways to Prepare:

1. Prepare a home emergency kit that is ready to go. Include extra batteries for flashlights and radio.
2. Teach your child to call you in the event of a power failure.
3. Teach your child to use flashlights in case of power failure - candles can cause fire.
4. Should water enter the home, teach your child not to turn on an appliance that is wet, or when standing in water or a wet area.
5. Gas leakages can occur during earthquakes, hurricanes and floods. At the first smell of gas, teach your child to get out of the house immediately, go to a safe place, and report gas leak to you or to the fire department.
6. In case of thunderstorms, your child should know to go inside the home to avoid the danger of lightning. Once inside, your child should stay away from windows and doors, and not use the telephone unless in case of an emergency. You may choose to ask your child to unplug certain appliances such as the T.V. or computer. Instruct him/her not to use any appliances during a storm. If your child is caught outdoors away from home, give instructions to stay away from metal objects, open water, lone trees, and hilltops. Your child should go to a safe building quickly as possible.
7. In case of a winter storm, children are often dismissed from school early. Your child should know the family plan for an early dismissal. Instruct your child to stay inside, keep warm, and listen to the radio for updates on the weather situation. Review the youth book rules for weather emergencies and add any other rules that are particular to your family's setting.
8. In case of tornado alert, your child should go to a designated safe place- usually a basement, or if you have no basement, an interior bathroom, closet or hallway. Instruct your child to stay away from doors, windows, and outside walls.

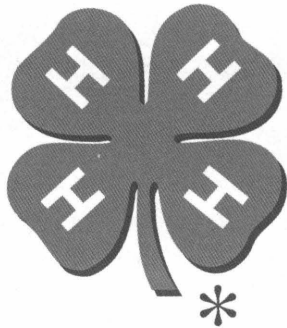
Family Activities:

 **Activity 1.** Recheck the home emergency kit to make sure it includes a portable battery operated radio, a flashlight, extra batteries, food which needs no cooking or refrigeration (1-2 days supply), bottled water, a first-aid kit, list of emergency numbers, list of emergency procedures, extra house key, paper, pen, pencil.

 **Activity 2.** Complete the "Family Bad Weather Help Sheet" and include it in your "Family Information" notebook. For every bad weather situation, remember to include the safe place to go and the safe way to behave.

 **Activity 3.** Have family rehearsals for the bad weather emergencies. For example, pretend a storm is coming. What will your children do? Instruct them to always save themselves and their siblings first -never try to save any possession or protect the house.





Family Bad Weather Conditions Help Sheet

Bad weather plan for _____

Bad weather plan for _____

What to do if parents are delayed at work due to bad weather _____

What to do in case of a power failure _____

What to do in case phone is out of order _____

How Will You Know Your Child's Feelings When Left In Self-Care?

Knowing your child's feelings and having your child know your feelings creates a bond of communication that facilitates the solving of many problems. As a parent, you are a primary role model for your child. Your actions, as well as your words, will help shape your child's behavior. The goal is to have an open relationship where there is comfortable dialogue between the two of you. This relationship sets the stage for you as a parent to give the very best teaching and guidance to your child; to teach competence in lifeskills that will enable your child to act responsibly in self-care. Your child will feel more and more secure.

How do you achieve an open relationship? Remember, all children are different and some children talk and share more freely than others, so don't be discouraged. Just maintain a close presence with your child by actively participating in his or her life. Below are ways to foster an open relationship.

Try this

- Make time daily to talk to your child about what's been happening
- Resist the tendency to be a parent who talks too much, instead be a concerned listener.
- Create special times when you and your child can be alone and involved in an activity.
- Show your acceptance of the many positive things your child does.
- Express your feelings openly; share appropriately with your child how things affect you.
- Acknowledge your child's feelings as valid emotions and give attention to them.
- Share your personal coping skills for dealing with stress, anxiety, problems, and pressures.
- Talk to your child about your work, describe your workplace, let your child visit.
- Express your love for your child in your touch and in your words.



Family Activities:



Activity 1. Try this "feelings game" with your child to check on his or her feelings. Share your feelings as well. Pick a time when you've got full attention - maybe you're out for pizza and waiting to be served. Keep it fun and you are sure to get lots of participation.

Here are some sentence starters. You and your child supply the endings.

When I'm by myself, I feel...

When I'm by myself, I really like to...

When I'm by myself, I really don't like to...

When I'm by myself, I get scared about...

When I'm by myself, I wish I knew...

When I'm by myself, I wish I could...

When I'm by myself, the best thing is...

When I'm by myself, the worst thing is...



Family Activities continued:



Activity 2. Complete this “parent to child” note to share your thoughts and feelings.

When I’m away from you, I _____

When you are on your way home from school, I _____

I feel proud when _____

I get angry when _____

I worry about _____

I hope you remember _____



Activity 3. Leave little notes now and then around the house for each other. You might tape a note to the bathroom mirror, put one in the school lunch bag, or attach one to a snack in the refrigerator.



Activity 4. Keep scheduling family meetings - a time set aside to do “feeling talk.”



Activity 5. Talk about signs of stress - a pounding heart, fast breathing, “butterflies” in the stomach, headaches, crankiness, nervousness, sleep problems, poor eating habits, nervous tics, etc. Practice these techniques for managing stress together. It will be great for the entire family!

DEEP BREATHING

- Relax shoulders and arms
- Slowly circle head right, then left. Repeat
- Close eyes
- Take a slow, deep breath. Exhale, repeat, concentrate on your breathing.

6-SECOND CALM DOWN

- Smile
- Inhale slowly, imagine the air coming in gently
- Exhale slowly through a relaxed jaw, let all the air out gently.
- Tell yourself you are now calm.
- Go back to what you were doing before you got upset.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

- Tighten the muscles in one part of your body
- Hold the tension for a few seconds
- Relax the tension

Do this exercise with your arms, legs, back, chest, shoulders, neck and back.

EXERCISE

- Walking, running, simple exercises, are all ways to reduce stress. Stay active.





HELP YOUR CHILD ORGANIZE A SCHEDULE FOR TIME IN SELF-CARE

Loneliness and boredom are feelings which can overwhelm a child at home alone in self-care. How can you best prepare your child to cope with these feelings? A child who has time organized into meaningful activities will be able to ward off negative feelings more easily than a child who has nothing to do.

As a parent, you can help your child combat boredom and loneliness before it happens by discussing activities your child might enjoy. Just giving your child a list of activities and asking him or her to choose might not be enough direction from you. You may need to discuss what he or she really likes to do and what you as a parent would like to have done. For example, you may wish for your child to do some homework, complete a few chores, and watch only a set amount of T.V. and only certain shows. Your child may want to fix a snack, do a puzzle, play a video game, play at the computer, read a book.

Please note: If your child is an avid user of the Internet, give your child strict instructions not to give out any personal information in the interest of safety.

Help your child create a schedule for time alone. A schedule can be the needed organizational framework to keep a child occupied. When wondering what to do, your child can refer to the schedule for direction. Checking off the items on a schedule will bring a sense of accomplishment. A daily schedule might look like this:

Day _____

Time	Activity

Activities might include snack preparation, hobbies, chores, homework, a special TV show, music practice, organized activities like 4-H, other clubs, sports, reading, etc. Planning with your child gives structure to your child's world and knowledge of your child's plans when you are not there.

When a child is left in self-care, it is important that he or she have an awareness of your daily schedule. It is helpful and comforting if your child knows when you are near a phone should he or she need you, and when you can be expected home. You might want to fill out a schedule for yourself and include phone numbers where you can be reached. Knowing where you are gives your child the security of your presence even when alone. Make sure your child knows the numbers of other trusted adults should you be unavailable.



Family Activities:



Activity 1. Make copies of your daily schedules and include them in the “Family Information” notebook.



Activity 2. Make copies of your child’s daily schedules and include them in the “Family Information” notebook.



Activity 3. Your child has directions for making an “I’m Bored” bag. Share the contents of your child’s bag. Talk about the activities included and offer more suggestions if you have them.



Activity 4. Organize activity boxes for your child. One box might include art supplies and ideas for projects your child can complete alone. Another box might be filled with word puzzle books. Yet another box might be filled with magazines and good books.



Activity 5. As a family, look at the possibilities of after-school activities for your child. These activities might include clubs, scouts, sports, volunteer work, visits to the library or a friend’s house. Discuss the logistics of your child getting to these activities and getting home. Will you need help with transportation? Could you trade weekend chauffeuring or babysitting of children with a parent who can help you during the day? Might you offer to pay for transportation?



Activity 6. As a family, compile a list of “good to watch” T.V. shows.



Activity 7. As a family, compile a list of house chores. Decide who can accomplish each chore and how long it may take to complete.



Activity 8. Encourage an enrichment activity for your child. It might spark a life long interest for your child.

Here are some examples:

- Old socks, fabric, scraps, yarn, and glue might lead to a puppeteer.
- Birdseed on the patio and a simple chart to record how many and what types of birds appear may help foster a career in biology or at least a lifelong interest in bird watching.
- Glass beads, wire and a book from the library on making beaded belts or purses may foster your child’s interest in fashion design.
- A ruler, French curve, colored pencils, and a book on mechanical drawing or architecture may bring forth an architect or draftsman.
- Clay or a paint set may bring forth a budding artist.

A CHILD MAY EXPERIENCE FEAR WHEN HOME ALONE

It is normal for your child to experience fear at times when home alone. Even adults can become anxious when an unusual noise is heard inside the house. A child may hear that same noise and imagine it to be the attack of a burglar. When a parent is home, a child can quickly receive reassurance. When in self-care, a child will need to learn other ways to cope with fear. It is therefore important that children who care for themselves be encouraged to talk with their parents about their fears.

Remember: Fear can be a positive emotion and alert a child to real or potential danger! Some of your child's fears will be "real" fears and some will be "unlikely" fears.

"Real" fears like...

- possibility of fire
- a persistent stranger at the door
- severe weather conditions

"Unlikely" fears like...

- strange house noises being mistaken for a burglar
- someone hiding in the closet

Hints For Helping Your Child Cope With Fears

- Give life skill training to your child to cope with real fears.
- Remember "unlikely fears" that exist in your child's mind cause great anxiety
- Never dismiss "unlikely fears" as silly or ridiculous.
- Resist forcing a child into a situation that he or she finds fearful.
- Allow your child to talk about his/ her personal fears, so "unlikely" fears can be put to rest.
- Encourage your child to keep busy - to keep his/her mind off thoughts about "unlikely fears."
- When afraid, teach your child to ask the question, "Is this something I know is serious or is it something that just makes me scared?"

How fearful is your child when home alone?

Does your child exhibit . . .

- Difference in eating habits
- Frequent nightmares
- Lack of interest in activities
- Frequent crying spells
- Irritability
- Frequent loss of temper
- Complaints of being lonely, bored and/or afraid.

You may decide that even with all your reassurance, teaching, and creative planning for time alone, your child is not secure with this self-care responsibility. The plan for self-care may need to be readjusted according to your child's emotional maturity. The time alone might need to be lessened, and some time be spent at a friend's home or neighbor's. You will know what to do after trial and error and much communication with your child.



Family Activities:



Activity 1. Make a list of the noises your house makes on a regular basis; for example, the sound of a toilet flushing, water running in the pipes, the dryer, the washer, etc.



Activity 2. Make a list of "real fears." Talk about the ways your family has learned to cope with real fears and dangers. Look back into your "Family Information" notebook for the rules for emergency situations.



Activity 3. Make a list with your child of the things that make him or her nervous when alone. Offer suggestions of ways to cope.

Ask specific questions like:

Do you ever feel scared when the doorbell rings and you are home alone?

What do you do?

Do you ever feel scared when you first come into the empty house?

What do you do?

Do you ever feel scared when you walk home alone?

What makes you afraid?

YOUR CHILD AND SIBLINGS

What do you do when you need to leave more than one child alone in self-care?

Here are some questions about siblings together in self-care and some suggestions for thought:

1. Who Is In Charge? What is the responsibility of each child?

- Some families leave the oldest child in charge. This may not work well in your family. The oldest child may be designated as the one in charge of decision making in time of emergency.
- Some families find it more satisfactory if each child has a set of responsibilities, and are to answer to you rather to an older sibling. Allowing each child to be in charge of his or herself to follow family rules seems to work well when the children are close in age and don't want to be "bossed" around by someone nearly their same age.

2. What will your children fight about?

- Think of the possible areas of sibling conflict - TV, computer, food, telephone, etc. By anticipating the potential areas of conflict, you can discuss situations that could occur and how the children might work things out.

3. Do your children know how to safely resolve conflict?

- Work out some "ground rules" for disagreements. For example, there will be no physical aggression allowed and no obscene language or name calling.
- Review the "Steps To Responsible Problem Solving" in the youth book. Put this process into practice with your child when you are solving problems together. The practice of this process will carry over into everyday problem solving with siblings.

Here's the "Steps To Responsible Problem Solving"

Remember the word PLAY! Resolve the problem and get back to PLAY!

P is for problem. State the problem. Decide - Is this really a problem?

L is for listen. Listen to each side of the problem.

A is for agree. Agree on possible solutions to the problem. Try a solution.

Y is for yellow light. A yellow light means wait and take a time-out, if you can't agree on a solution. If you still can't agree after a time-out, an adult may need to help solve the problem.

- Establish a "time-out" area for each child. This "time-out" area should be a safe haven for each child away from the conflict - a place to calm down and think through the problem.

4. Do children have individual activities?

- Whenever possible, schedule fun activities for each child, such as school clubs, sports, or music lessons. This reduces the amount of time the children are alone together.

5. Are you positive about the self-care situation ?

- Encourage all the time! Let the children know you feel confident they are doing a good job of self-care. Try hard not to focus on the negative.

Your Child and Friends

Belonging to a group of friends is an important part of your child's life. Selecting friends and developing and nurturing friendships are valuable developmental skills. Parents worry about their child's choice of friends and the pressures their child might feel to try unacceptable or dangerous activities. When children are in self-care, peer pressure is a major parental concern. Fortunately, parents can equip their child with tools to use in their relationships to help them make good choices of friends and to engage in positive behavior.



Here are some strategies:

1. Talk with your child about what qualities a good friend should have. Make a list of good friend qualities - qualities like humor, patience, kindness, generosity, acceptance, loyalty, trust, thoughtfulness, availability, dependability, support, honesty, flexibility.
2. Discuss the qualities you think would not be wanted in a friend. Make a list of these.
3. Talk to your child about the kinds of things a "friend" might encourage him or her to do that would be against family rules. Encourage your child to talk about his or her thoughts on acceptable behavior.
4. Do spend time with your child and his or her friends; enjoy them and get to know them.
5. Encourage your child to come to you when he or she has problems with friends.

A child in self-care wants to have time with friends. As a family you will need to make decisions regarding your child in self-care and friends.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. Are friends allowed to visit my child while in self-care?
 - If you decide yes, be clear as to which friends may visit, for how long, and the rules they must abide by. What happens if a friend breaks your family rules? Will your child know what to do? Should your child call you or their contact person should a problem arise with a friend?
 - If you decide no, remember your child needs the company of friends and you will need to build in "friend time" when you are home. If your child is involved in after-school activities, this will provide time for socializing. Perhaps, your child can visit a friend whose parent is home after school and you can reciprocate the visit on weekends or in the evening. Perhaps, you can arrange for a babysitter one afternoon so your child can entertain a friend. Your child may want to spend time on the phone with friends, so discuss phone rules. How long may the phone call last? Do you have call-waiting in case of an emergency?
2. Is my child allowed to go to a friend's home when in self-care?
 - If yes, which friends' homes are acceptable to visit? What if their parents aren't home?

YOUR CHILD AND PEER PRESSURE

When your child is in self-care, there is a great opportunity for friends to influence your child's behavior.

Here are the suggestions given in your child's book to help deal with peer pressure:

Suggestions

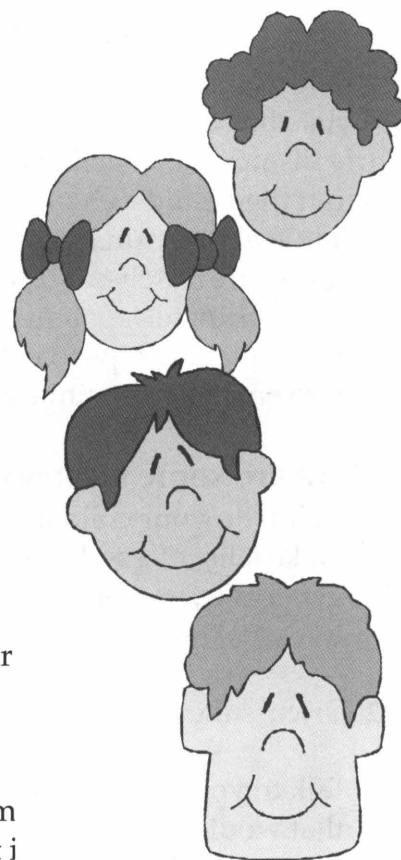
- Just say NO! and say it firmly.
- Walk away! Just leave a group of peers who are about to get into trouble.
- Change the subject to a more positive thing to do.
- Choose friends who do the kind of things that are O.K. with your rules.
- Talk over this peer pressure problem with an adult you trust.

Reinforcement of these suggestions at home will give your child some ideas for getting out of a pressure situation. Help your child realize it is a matter of personal responsibility when making a decision, and sometimes decisions are difficult to make. Make it known to your child that you are available whenever he/she needs to talk about troublesome peer problems. Having you as a good listener will be a great asset in your child's decision making process.

Here Are Hints On How To Be A Good Listener:

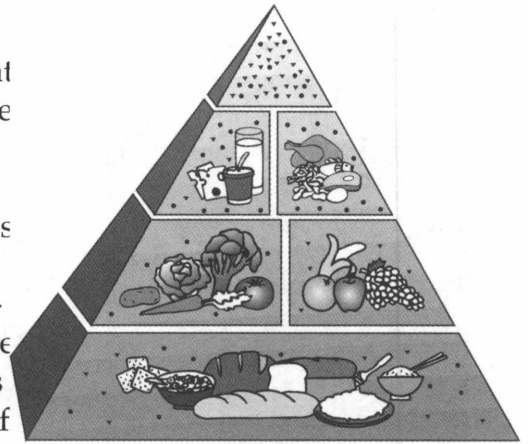
1. Stop talking!
2. Put your child at ease, so he or she feels free to talk.
3. Show that you want to listen. Look and act interested.
4. Remove distractions. Stop everything else you're doing. Turn off the TV; maybe shut the door.
5. Empathize. Try to put yourself in your child's place so you can see his or her point of view.
6. Be patient. Allow plenty of time; don't interrupt or hurry.
7. Hold your temper. Think about what you're saying.
8. Go easy on argument and criticism. If you put your child on the defensive, he or she may "clam up" or get angry.
9. Ask questions. Encourage your child by showing you are really listening. He or she will tell you more.

Remember: Keep family lines of communication open. Through communication a family becomes strong and builds family values that can serve as a foundation for good decision making.



A CHILD IN SELF-CARE GETS HUNGRY!

Parents want their child to make good food choices. A parent at home is able to monitor eating habits and steer their child in the direction of nutritious food. A child in self-care needs extra preparation to act responsibly with regard to proper nutrition. Here is a diagram of the food pyramid. You will want to discuss the foods you would like your child to try, and also, the foods you would like your child to avoid, such as sodas, candy, cookies, etc. Children love sweets so try to offer some sweets that are fairly nutritious like fruit and fruit juices or the more nutritious types of cookies. You may wish to prepare snack foods ahead of time and place them in the refrigerator so your child can eat healthy choices at a moment's notice. Buy nutritious snacks that need little or no preparation. Use the food pyramid as a teaching tool for nutritious snack planning.



Family Activities:



Activity 1. Go grocery shopping as a family for healthy and good-to-eat snacks. Use the food pyramid diagram to make healthy choices.



Activity 2. Make a list of possible snacks to eat. Put this list in the "Family Information" notebook for quick reference. When hunger strikes, your child has a ready list of ideas.



Activity 3. Make a list of recipes your child can fix when you are not home. There are several non-cooking recipes in the youth book. Include these in your "Family Information" notebook as well.



Activity 4. Give your child a cook's tour of the kitchen, explaining which appliances and tools may be used and how to use them, and which are off limits. You might fill one drawer with those utensils your child is permitted to use. Store needed supplies within easy reach of your child.



Activity 5. Give your child kitchen skills by teaching the skill of food preparation. Make recipes and meals together. You will be able to teach safe food preparation practices and catch any mistakes your child may be prone to make when home alone. This can be great fun and beneficial training for life.



Activity 6. Make a list of safety rules for the kitchen and include them in your "Family Information" notebook. You will decide how much cooking your child is to do when home alone. Your family rule about cooking may be, "Never use the oven, stove, or other appliances unless an adult is with you.", or you may allow your child to do some limited cooking.



KITCHEN SAFETY RULES

**Here are some suggested rules
should you allow your
child to cook.**

1. Always wash your hands before handling food.
2. Keep the handles of any pots and pans turned away from the edge of the stove or counter
3. Potholders, dish towels, and cookbooks should be kept away from a hot burner for fear of fire.
4. Tie back hair and do not wear loose clothing or long droopy sleeves. Hair and clothing can catch on fire.
5. Use oven mitts or potholders when holding hot pans.
6. Keep wet hands away from electrical appliances and outlets.
7. Pick up a knife by its handle and not its blade. When cutting with a knife, cut away from yourself and use a cutting board.
8. Clean up spills right away so you won't slip.
9. Remember to turn off stove and oven when finished cooking.
10. Only use those appliances which parents give permission to use. (e.g. the microwave, but not the oven).

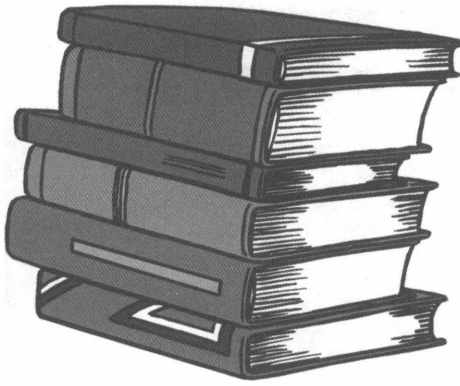
Congratulations On Your Participation In The Strong Families: Competent Kids Program!

Congratulations - You and your child have participated in a program that prepares families with information about life skills needed when families are considering self-care. As parents, this information will serve as a resource to you - the greatest teachers of life skills to your child. On the next page is a list of books for you and your child that further discuss the topic of self-care. Keep learning !





Books To Read



Brazelton, T. Berry. Working and Caring. Addison-Wesley, 1985. Stories of three families, a professional couple, a blue-collar couple, and a single working mother. Dr. Brazelton, pediatrician, discusses returning to work, coping with time restraints, daycare options, etc.

Chaback, Elaine and Pat Fortunato. The Official Kids' Survival Kit: How To Do Things On Your Own. Little, Brown and Company, Boston 1981. An alphabetical book giving practical advice to help in coping with everyday situations and routines as well as in handling accidents and common medical emergencies. Written for school-age children.

Edelman, Marian Wright. The Measure of Our Success: A Letter to My Children and Yours. Beacon Press, 1992. Edelman, head of the Children's Defense Fund and famed child advocate, offers an inspiring view of the role of parent and a message to parents in regard to instilling values.

Gilbert, Sara D. By Yourself. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1983. This book was written for children telling them tips for keeping house, taking care of clothes, managing time, being safe, and entertaining oneself, etc.

Grollman, Earl A. and Gerri L. Sweder. Teaching Your Child to Be Home Alone. Lexington Books, 1992. Valuable resource guide for families to use together to meet the challenges of leaving children in self-care.

Greene, Lawrence J., The Life-Smart Kid: Teaching Your Child To Use Good Judgment In Every Situation. Prima Publishing, 1995

Hautzig, Esther Rudomin. Life With Working Parents, Macmillan, 1976. A guide for children who must cope with a variety of daily situations on their own because their parents work.
Juvenile Non-Fiction

Kyte, Kathy S. In Charge : A Complete Book For Kids With Working Parents, Knopf, Random House, 1983. Practical advice for children who must take care of themselves before and after school. Juvenile Non-Fiction

Long, Lynette. The Kids' Self-Care Book, On My Own. Acropolis Books LTD., Washington D.C., 1984. A workbook with 125 activities to help keep latchkey children safe and entertained during self-care.

Long, Lynette, and Thomas Long. The Book for Latchkey Children and Their Parents. Arbor House, New York, 1983. A practical guide that offers parents and their children solutions for reducing their problems and anxieties, including: understanding the unspoken fears of latchkey children, teaching your child to become self-sufficient, improving parent-child relationships, preparing your child for any emergency, caring for siblings.

Long, Thomas. Safe At Home, Safe Alone. Miles River Press, 1009 Duke Street, Alexandria, Va. 22314. A workbook to help children 7-10 to learn to manage responsibility for themselves through a colorful presentation of activities, games, puzzles, and exercises.

Newman, Susan. Never Say Yes To A Stranger: What Your Child Must Know To Stay Safe. Putnam, 1985. Stories illustrated with photographs depicting different situations in which children are approached by strangers. Explained is the importance of understanding the dangers and manner in which to react.

Olds, Sally Wendkos. Working Parents' Survival Guide. Prima Publishing & Communications, P.O. Box 1260WP, Rocklin, CA 95677, 1989. A comprehensive book discussing every aspect of being a working parent.

McConnell, Nancy P. Be Home Soon! A Guide for Parents of Latchkey Children. Current, Inc., Colorado Springs, Colorado 80941, 1988. A guide written for both parents and children. One half of the book is for parents to read, the other for children. Together children and parents develop a plan for self-care.

Price, Susan Crites and Tom. The Working Parents Help Book. Peterson's, Princeton, N.J. 1994. A classic book for working parents, built on solid research and presented in easy to read language.

Robinson, Bryan E., Bobbie H. Rowland, and Mick Coleman. Home Alone Kids: The Working Parent's Complete Guide to Providing the Best Care for Your Child. Lexington Books, 1989. Written for parents who primarily must rely on self-care when their children are not in school. Good advice for preparation of child, on evaluating the situation, and finding another plan for care should self-care not work.

Sale, June Solnit, and Kit Kollenberg. The Working Parents Book. Fireside, Rockefeller Center, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY, 1996. A practical guide on everyday issues of balancing work and family. Information presented in straightforward language.

Schick, Eleanor. Home Alone. Dial Press, 1980. A picture book story that tells of a young boy who spends his first afternoon alone at home while his mother is at work.

Stanek, Muriel. All Alone After School. Albert Whitman & Co, Niles, Illinois, 1985. Story of a young boy who is in self-care when his mother must take a job and can't afford a babysitter. He gradually develops confidence about staying home alone after school. Very good child's fictional story about a real life issue

Swan, Helen L., and Victoria Houston. Alone After School. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1985. This is a family workbook that helps you design a self-care program with your child's needs in mind.

Woolever, Elizabeth, editor. Better Homes and Gardens Books. Your Child, The Latchkey Years. Meredith Corporation, Des Moines, Iowa, 1990. This practical book helps parents think through their decision for choosing self-care and then offers practical no-nonsense suggestions to help the parents guide their children.

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