

Safe & Unsafe Secrets

WHAT YOUR CHILD WILL LEARN:

- Understand what makes a safe secret/surprise (e.g. birthday present)
- Understand what makes an unsafe secret
- Have an understanding we don't keep unsafe secrets
- Seek help from a trusted adult about unsafe secrets



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Perpetrators often encourage secret-keeping as a way of controlling and manipulating children, which can make it harder for children to speak up. Helping children understand the difference between safe and unsafe secrets supports their ability to recognise when something feels unsafe, and to seek help. It helps to learn the 'rules' about secrets from the very beginning.



SAFE SECRETS

- The secret only needs to be kept for a short while, as it will be shared later.
- Everyone involved feels happy and excited
- No one is hurt on the inside or outside of their body
- You can choose to tell someone on your network if you want to
- You have choice or control over sharing the secret



UNSAFE SECRETS

- You have to keep the secret forever, because someone has said you can never tell anyone.
- Someone might be feeling worried or scared about the secret
- Someone might be hurt on the inside or the outside of their body
- You're not allowed to tell someone on your network if you want to.
- You don't have any choice or control about sharing the secret

WHAT YOU CAN DO AT HOME AND PLAYGROUP:

- Start teaching the difference between safe and unsafe secrets with everyday life events: birthday, Father's Day, Mother's Day, Christmas etc.
- Set an expectation within your family that there are no secrets, only surprises
- Talk to your extended family to make sure they do not ask your child to keep secrets from you



BOOKS:

- **Little Big Chats- Secrets and Surprises:** Jayneen Sanders
- **Handa's Surprise:** Eileen Browne
- **Snow Bears Surprise:** Catherine Allison



GAMES & ACTIVITIES:

Playing games is a great way to help children learn the difference between **safe** and **unsafe secrets**.

Incorporate safe and unsafe secret messaging into every day play. For example:

- **In the home corner-** you could make a pretend cake to surprise someone for their birthday or 'just because'
- **Get crafty-** make a card, drawing, or painting for someone as a gift or surprise
- **Play with puppets-** role play different secret scenario's and ask your child if it is a safe secret or unsafe secret.
- **Playing with dolls-** role play different secret scenario's and ask your child if it is a safe secret or unsafe secret.

Reinforcing the safe and unsafe rules (listed on the previous page) to help your child understand what makes it a "safe secret" or "unsafe secret"