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Month Five

Safety Physically, Emotionally and Socially

One of the interesting rules that Di Zi Gui teaches is as relevant today as it was in the 1600s.

- When leaving, one must tell one's parents
- Upon returning, one must report face to face

Substitute parents for the family member that is responsible for the child, but this advice remains very important. Your students will be safe if the responsible adult knows where they are when they are not in school or at home.

Another important rule for young people to understand is:

- Injury to one's body, brings parents worry.

You and their parents both want them to be safe. This is an important topic to discuss with the class.

Use a flip chart or white board to elicit rules from the class themselves for themselves!

Just like the Di Zi Gui, you can probably get similar rules from the class through a brainstorming session.


To jumpstart their thinking use the safety cards in this lesson. Print and cut apart. Give each three students one unsafe example and have them come up with what they should do to stay safe. Give them 10 minutes to read and discuss. Then have each group report out their scenario and what they decided to do to stay safe.

From the responses, come up with some basic rules that could be something like:

- Avoid walking alone in public; have a friend or two with you if you do walk somewhere
- Don't touch substances that may hurt you like cigarettes, alcohol, drugs
- Be careful in sharing personal information on the phone or internet
- Don't ever post pictures that show your body or activities. Nothing shared on digital media is ever really erased.

Emotional Safety

The journal entries for this month will be an exploration of physical safety. But there is also emotional safety. When we have relationships, our feelings may get hurt. In addition to the safety cards, there are Fractured Fairy Tales about relationship issues that can be read in pairs and discussed. Then again, a class discussion can bring to light the new understandings that came from finishing each of the Fractured Fairy Tales to make a happy ending.



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Taking responsibility for your actions

In order to prepare for adulthood, young people need to learn responsibility for their actions. If you used the Fractured Fairy Tales activity, you probably had stimulated a great deal of discussion about what some of the characters did either consciously or unconsciously. Taking responsibility for one's actions is quite important. Bullying or calling people names is hurtful to the target but also causes a disruption to the emotional climate for everyone around. "Upstanding" is the name given to an action from a bystander that actually gets involved to help the target of the insult or inappropriate remark.

One of the important parts of creating a safe emotional space is making sure everyone feels responsibility for their actions and words with others. This is the golden rule discussed in previous months. Your guidance and your supervision of interactions is critical to setting the tone for your classroom atmosphere.

Sometimes students will act appropriately at school but then go on social media to either bully or disrespect a class mate. As a middle school teacher, you already know about the triangles of friendships forged. This student is friends with two friends and they take turns leaving the other person out shunning them. It is very frustrating for adults in these situations. However, without direct instruction, young people will flounder in their interactions with peers. You are very important in guiding and setting ground rules for safe and appropriate emotional and social exchanges. You have every right to insert yourself into situations that create hurt feelings. Everyone wants to be accepted in their peer group. Not everyone has the social skills to make that a reality. If you set a rule with the class about kindness in interactions both in class and on social media, you give the target of any negative interchanges the opportunity to call on and remind the bully of your ground rules of interaction. Do not be afraid to insert yourself. Parents are often unable to manage these situations without help. If you need help, seek out your peers at school to support you. The guidance counselor or psychologist may be able to either give you advice or join you in a class discussion in order to support you.

In the following month, we offer exploration of how to incorporate kindness and care for self and broaden the responsibility to family, school, community and planet.

