



# Safety Rocks



Working together to keep children safe

★ Parent & Carer Newsletter ★ Summer 2016

This summer issue of Safety Rocks looks at using technology safely, helping children's anxiety with mindfulness, tackling child abuse, and keeping children safe during the summer holidays.

## ★ Child Safety Week - June 6 – 12: turn off technology for safety

This Child Safety Week, the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) is asking families to pledge to 'turn off technology for safety'. Accidents often happen when we're distracted and serious accidents can happen alarmingly quickly – when we're answering a call or checking a text.

By turning off technology at crucial times in the day, parents can give children their full attention and so keep them safer when pressures mount. It also sets a good example to children and young people to turn off technology when crossing the road or other times when you need to concentrate to stay safe.

*Adapted from [www.pcadvisor.co.uk](http://www.pcadvisor.co.uk).*



★ Go to the CAPT web-site for more details about the child safety week campaign and to download a resource pack: [www.capt.org.uk](http://www.capt.org.uk)

## ★ Help us make Brighton and Hove an Online Safety City

In February this year local charity Safety Net hosted a conference for professionals, parents and young people to ask the question: "What would it take for Brighton and Hove to be the Online Safety Capital of the UK?"

What can you do to help make this a reality?

- ★ talk to your children's school about what they are doing to support online safety for children
- ★ attend an online safety session for parents
- ★ use technology mindfully – turn off and pay attention
- ★ talk to your children about how they use technology
- ★ email us your thoughts on what you think an Online Safety City would look like: [newsletter@safety-net.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@safety-net.org.uk)



Safety Net is running online safety sessions for parents. The session lasts 2 hours and includes:

- ★ Latest online trends for children & young people
- ★ Information about parental controls
- ★ Discussion about screen time and parenting tips for when technology is "getting in the way"
- ★ Technology is contagious – are you being a positive role model?
- ★ Signposting to useful websites

Sessions run on June 16th, August 23rd, September 21st. Contact us for details: 01273 420973 or email [training@safety-net.org.uk](mailto:training@safety-net.org.uk)

## ★ Helping children deal with anxiety: mindfulness for children

Summer Term can be a stressful time for children, with tests, changes in class coming up or the move on to secondary school. Practising mindfulness as a family can be a useful way of helping children manage these challenges.

Mindfulness is about learning to focus our attention on our experience as it happens, moment by moment, with curiosity rather than judgement. Instead of stressing about what has happened or might happen, it trains us to respond to whatever is happening right now, whatever the circumstances and whatever we are feeling. This helps provide a 'buffer' for children – particularly for those prone to anxiety – against being swept along by their emotions.

Brain imaging studies show that mindfulness positively alters the structure and function of the brain, improving thought processing, learning and well-being. If children are taught how to practise it at a young age, whilst their brains are still developing, mindfulness becomes a powerful habit that will help them thrive.

For children to engage with mindfulness, it is important that they see us modelling it ourselves: are we stepping back in stressful situations and reflecting rather than just reacting in the heat of the moment?

To be effective, mindfulness needs to be incorporated into family life and practised daily, just like healthy eating and exercise.



Take time out to really be with your children, to listen to them, and engage in activities that allow you to 'be in the moment' like a walk, an art activity or playing calming music. Any daily activity (even brushing our teeth or walking the dog) is an opportunity to practise and ground ourselves in the here and now, fully focused on what we are doing, rather than being run by our thoughts and worries.

### FURTHER RESOURCES

★ 'Planting Seeds – practising mindfulness with children' by Thich Nhat Hanh

★ 8 ways to teach mindfulness to kids:

[www.huffingtonpost.com/sarah-rudell-beach-/8-ways-to-teach-mindfulness-to-kids\\_b\\_5611721.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sarah-rudell-beach-/8-ways-to-teach-mindfulness-to-kids_b_5611721.html)

### ★ Here are some practical suggestions that may help anxious children:

- ★ **Focus on breathing** - encourage them to use their breath as an anchor; this is particularly useful for children who are feeling anxious, as focusing on the breath helps them to switch their attention from worrying thoughts to sensory perception. Placing one hand lightly on the stomach (or for younger children, lying down with a small soft toy on their tummy) can help bring awareness to the rise and fall of the breath. Remember they are simply observing the natural rhythm of the breath, not attempting to change it.
- ★ They may like to close their eyes during this exercise, but **paying attention to the sights and sounds** around them is also a beneficial way to practise and can help shift attention away from anxious thoughts. Linking this exercise to a particular daily activity can help make it a regular practice – perhaps just before breakfast or last thing at night.
- ★ **Create a 'calm space' in your home** – even if it is just a cushion in a corner – where children (and parents!) can spend a few minutes practising mindfulness. If a young child sees a parent using this space regularly they will be encouraged to develop similar positive habits.
- ★ **Deciding on a 'quiet time'** is another way of building in mindfulness – a few minutes each day when the TV, phones and computers etc. are all turned off and the family can just 'be' together rather than 'do'.
- ★ For older children, a useful way to take a 'mindful minute' during a hectic day is to **mute ads during a commercial break** on TV and bring the attention back to the breath, or to install a 'mindfulness bell' app on their mobile phones.

*Thanks to Sally Turner at the Dharma Primary School in Brighton for this article: [www.dharmaschool.co.uk](http://www.dharmaschool.co.uk)*

# ★ Parent Page: Together we can tackle child abuse

The Department for Education launched a campaign in February of this year to encourage all of us to think about how we protect children. Called 'Together we can Tackle Child Abuse', the campaign sets out what we can all do to keep children safer.

★ **Myth 1: It's not my job to report child abuse – that's for teachers or professionals to handle** • Fact: Everyone in the community has an important role to play in keeping children safe. If a child is being abused or their safety is at risk they need adults to notice something is wrong and act on their concerns. A third of people who suspect child abuse, do nothing because they're worried about being wrong or making things worse. You don't have to be completely certain to do something, if you have a feeling that something's not right, talk to your schools Designated Safeguarding Lead or the local Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) who can look into it.

★ **Myth 2: Reporting a child/family to 'Social Services' means the child will be removed from their family immediately by social workers** • Fact: Social workers' job is to protect vulnerable children and provide support to families who need help. Sharing your concerns with Social Services will not automatically mean a child is taken into care, but could mean a problem is spotted sooner and action taken to help the family. Where a decision is made to remove a child from their family it is made by the courts for the protection of the child.

★ **Myth 3: People will know it is me that reported and my call will not remain anonymous** • Fact: You will be asked about your own details but as a member of the public, you can choose to remain anonymous.

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**Who can I talk to?** Every school has to have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). If you are worried about a child, you can talk to the DSL in your school; this service should be advertised to parents and carers. Or you can ring the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) on 01273 290 400 who will investigate the concerns by gathering information from a number of sources. Your piece of the puzzle might be the one that makes the difference.

★ **Myth 4: It's only child abuse if it involves physical violence** • Fact: In 2014-15, over three quarters of the children on child protection plans were placed there as a result of neglect or emotional abuse rather than physical violence or sexual abuse. Many children are likely to experience more than one type of abuse and all types can have a long lasting effect on a child's physical and mental health, happiness and well-being.

★ **Myth 5: Child abuse doesn't happen in my neighbourhood, I live in a good area** • Fact: Child abuse and neglect can happen anywhere whatever a child's background, age, gender, race or sexuality or wherever they live, any child or young person could be abused or neglected.



## ★ To spot the signs of child abuse or neglect, look for changes in:

**Appearance** – such as frequent unexplained injuries, consistently poor hygiene, matted hair, unexplained gifts, or a parent regularly collecting children from school when drunk

**Behaviour** - such as demanding or aggressive behaviour, frequent lateness or absence from school, avoiding their own family, misusing drugs or alcohol, or being constantly tired

**Communication** – such as sexual or aggressive language, self-harming, becoming secretive and reluctant to share information or being overly obedient

★ **If you have a question** or would like to suggest a topic for future editions, email us at [newsletter@safety-net.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@safety-net.org.uk). For an online edition, visit [www.safety-net.org.uk](http://www.safety-net.org.uk) or [www.brightonandhovelscb.org.uk](http://www.brightonandhovelscb.org.uk)

★ **Join our Editorial Team** - If you would like to get involved in suggesting topics, giving feedback and helping put this newsletter together, why not join our community editor's team? This could be via email, phone or coming to meetings at our offices. It could just be one or two hours' a month or more if you have time.

## Topics for the Term: Summer Safety



With summer holidays coming up, this is a good time of year to focus on water safety for your children. Sadly every year children die or are seriously injured due to drowning.

Drowning Prevention Week runs from 18 – 26 June 2016, and encourages schools, clubs, leisure centres and communities to stay safe around water with some simple safety steps:

- ★ Make sure children have constant supervision when they're in or around water.
- ★ Identify at least one adult "water watcher" at all times.
- ★ Teach children survival swimming skills.
- ★ Set water safety rules for the whole family – e.g. children never swimming alone, inexperienced swimmers staying in water less than chest deep, etc.

### FREE summer activities

★ **One Youth** run SafeHouse on Tuesdays from 3.30pm - 5.30pm, a safe space for young people from Years 5 to Year 11 to come along for homework support, activities, space to chat, and share a free cooked meal. For more info, contact Fee on 01273 694 746 or [fee@oneyouthbrighton.org.uk](mailto:fee@oneyouthbrighton.org.uk)

★ **Brunswick Festival** is celebrating 35 years this year; highlights include: 20 and 21 August - a FREE fun-filled family weekend in Brunswick Square, Brighton. Sunday 14 August: a rural Day at St Ann's Well Gardens, featuring Scruffs dog show

★ Remember that swimming lessons and life jackets aren't a replacement for adult supervision. Drowning can happen quickly in less than a minute and in only an inch of water.

East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service works with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and the National Water Safety Forum to promote water safety and encourage people to learn to swim.

### Useful resources for parents and carers

★ There are some useful sea safety videos on the Brighton and Hove council website about staying safe on the beach. You can also contact the council for information about registering under 16's to swim free in some Brighton & Hove swimming pools - call 01273 290 000 or visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/leisure-and-libraries/seafront/sea-safety](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/leisure-and-libraries/seafront/sea-safety)

★ Child-Friendly Brighton has a useful list of places that do swimming lessons and also lists activities for children and families in the Brighton and Hove area visit: [www.childfriendlybrighton.co.uk/indoor-activities/swimming](http://www.childfriendlybrighton.co.uk/indoor-activities/swimming)

### Children getting lost: top tips

We all know that sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach when you realise you have lost sight of your child in a public place. To help keep them safe:

- ★ make sure that they know their full name and if old enough their telephone number (you can buy ID wristbands for children online)
- ★ practice 'what if' scenarios before you go out...e.g. 'what could you do if you got lost at the shopping centre?'
- ★ arrange a point to meet in advance if you get separated or for small children tell them to stay where they are
- ★ tell them to find someone who works in a shop, at an information point or ask other parents who have children with them for help

**Safety Net is 20 this year, and to celebrate we are organising a number of fundraising activities around the city. To find out more, email: [events@safety-net.org.uk](mailto:events@safety-net.org.uk) or go to [www.safety-net.org.uk](http://www.safety-net.org.uk)**

### Working with communities to keep children safe

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