

Promoting Safety Skills in Children: A Quasi-experimental Evaluation of the Kidpower Everyday Safety Skills Program

Alaina Brenick¹, Julie Shattuck², Alice Donlan³, Eileen L. Zurbriggen⁴, & Shinchieh Duh⁴



Introduction

- The negative effects of abuse and victimization are vast, emerge in both the short and long-term, and are cumulative, even among young children (e.g., Gilbert et al., 2009; Shalev et al., 2012)
- Effective strategies for dealing with abuse or bullying, decrease victimization and reduce negative emotional impacts on children (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Salmivalli, Karhunen, & Lagerspetz, 1996; Smith & Shu, 2000; Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, & Chauhan, 2004)
- The need for early risk-reduction, prevention, and intervention is warranted given that children often lack self-protection skills and knowledge about dangerous and abusive situations (Wurtele, 2009)
- Prior research indicates that incorporation of the following “best practices” predicts better program outcomes:
 - be appropriate for the target audience,
 - take on a skills-based approach,
 - include parents/caregivers,
 - take on a multi-setting/community approach,
 - take place over an extended period of time, and
 - provide ample opportunities to practice new skills (see Hassall & Hanna, 2007; Kenny, Capris, Thakkar-Kolar, Ryan, & Runyon, 2008; Webster-Stratton & Taylor, 2001; Wolfe, Jaffe, & Crooks, 2006).
- One program that uses these best practices is the Kidpower Every Day Safety Skills Program (ESSP)



- Research Question:** “To what extent will the Kidpower ESSP enable children to acquire and demonstrate knowledge of personal actions and self-advocacy skills that will help them make safe choices in situations with other children, familiar adults, and strangers?”
- Hypothesis 1a** Participants in the ESSP will demonstrate immediate significant increases in skills and knowledge for making safe choices
- Hypothesis 1b.** Children will retain the learned safety skills and knowledge three months after participation in the initial workshop
- Hypothesis 2.** Children who participated in the ESSP will demonstrate significantly greater safety skills and knowledge as compared to comparison group children who did not participate in the program

Methods

Participants

Classrooms were randomly assigned to be either the treatment (3 schools, 8 classes, $n = 128$) or the comparison group (2 schools, 6 classes, $n = 110$)

	# of Students (Girls)	
	Comp. Group	Tx Group
Hispanic-Amer.	52 (25)	71 (30)
Anglo-Amer.	44 (19)	48 (22)
Asian-Amer./Pacific Islander	6 (2)	6 (4)
Multi-Ethnic	5 (2)	2 (2)
Unknown	3 (2)	1 (0)
Total	110 (53)	128 (58)

Measure

The Safety Skills Assessment.

Safety skills knowledge (15 items)

- Responses included: one safety-conscious response strategy (correct answer), two unsafe response strategies, and a fourth option, “I don’t know” (incorrect answers)

Basic stranger knowledge (3 items)

- Responses included: yes, no, I don’t know



Procedure

Time 1: Pre-test

Comp and TX groups: Safety Skills Assessment Pre-test administered

TX group ONLY: received 2-hour Kidpower ESSP

- The presenter introduced safety skills
- Each skill was demonstrated with the classroom teacher and/or a student
- The class then practiced the skill (as a whole class or in small groups)
- Each child also practiced stopping unwanted touches and yelling and running to safety individually

Time 2: Immediate post-workshop Post-test

TX group ONLY: Safety Skills Assessment Immediate Post-test administered

- Received ten 15-minute follow-up Kidpower skills practice lessons over the next 3-months
- Completed ten parent-child homework assignments from the *Kidpower Safety Comics for Adults With Younger Children*



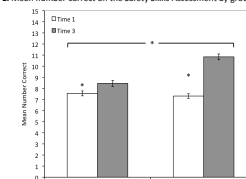
Time 3: 3-month follow-up Post-test

Comp and TX groups: Safety Skills Assessment Post-test administered

Upon completion of the study, Kidpower provided equivalent training to all children in the comparison group, along with their classroom teachers

Results & Discussion

Figure 1. Mean number correct on the Safety Skills Assessment by group and time



Note. Asterisks represent main effects for Group and Time and an interaction effect of Group \times Time (all $ps < .001$). Error bars represent standard errors of means.

Survey item	Tx group		Comp. group	
	χ^2	p	χ^2	p
Boundary Setting				
If someone you like a lot wants to give you a hug, but you do not feel like a hug, what would you do?	27.77	.00	2.08	.20
If someone you like a lot feels upset or sad because you do not want to be hugged or kissed, what would you do?	22.23	.00	3.60	.08
Stranger Safety				
Suppose your grownup is talking on the phone and a woman in a uniform with a delivery truck wants to deliver a package to your house. What would you do?	24.00	.00	0.03	1.00
Suppose you are on your own and someone you do not know picks up your bike and asks you to come and get it. What would you do?	28.88	.00	3.80	.07
Is a stranger anyone you do not know, including a kid, a woman, or a man?	20.45	.00	12.60	.00
Is it possible for a stranger to know your name?	42.64	.00	6.82	.01
Help-Seeking				
If a person you like a lot asked you to keep a problem a secret, what would you do?	56.53	.00	0.93	.44
If you have a safety problem and your grownups are busy, what would you do?	77.19	.00	4.50	.05
If a person does something that makes you feel scared, what would you do?	7.69	.01	0.03	1.00
Maintaining Calm and Confidence while Being Aware				
If a person near you is acting in a way that makes you feel very uncomfortable, what would you do?	20.51	.00	11.31	.00

Note. Green Highlight = significant change in only TX group. Red highlight = significant change in both groups.

Summary of Findings:

- Kidpower participants increased their safety test scores after the intervention workshop
- Kidpower participants had higher safety test scores than students who did not participate, particularly related to boundary setting, stranger safety, and help seeking
- These gains and differences were sustained after three months of follow-up support

Future Research:

- Test for differences by antagonist (peer, adult, family member, etc.) and interaction with type of safety skill/knowledge
- Assess preventions for online bullying
- Include the larger community (other students and teachers in school) and to take place over longer periods of time

Conclusion:

- Continued research is necessary to refine the best practices of child safety training. However, our findings provide strong empirical evidence in support of the effectiveness of the Kidpower ESSP, which can serve as a model for future interventions