

SAFETY WITH ANIMALS

Suggested Grade Level: Kindergarten-3

Character: Respect

Relative Subject(s): Language Art

Objective: To familiarize students with the appropriate actions to take if approached by an unfamiliar dog.

Materials:

- "If a Strange Dog Approaches..." handout
- Human puppet
- Dog puppet

Method: Introduce this lesson by talking with students about unfamiliar animals they have encountered that frightened them. Due to fear, some children become prejudiced toward stray animals and want to harm them. To prevent this, explain that when an animal is frightened, he may bite to protect himself. This does not mean the animal is bad or mean, just frightened. Stray animals are in trouble. Stray animals may be homeless, or could be lost, hurt, or sick. They need our help. Ask students to think about how it would feel to be lost or alone with no family or friends. But, remember that even if an animal needs help that is a job for an adult. The first rule to pay special attention to is:

NEVER GO NEAR A STRANGE ANIMAL. STAY AWAY. You would not approach a person you do not know, and the same is true for animals.

If a dog comes up to you, follow these five steps to keep yourself safe:

1. Do not run. Freeze. Act like a tree. Stay very still and quiet, arms at your sides, feet together. Distribute the "If a dog approaches..." handout to students. Demonstrate this action then have the class practice.
2. Use friendly body language. How? Don't scream. Dogs have sensitive hearing and this could excite or scare them. Don't stare into the dog's eyes. In dog language, staring is a challenge to fight. Don't wave your arms around or try to hit the dog. Don't kick at the dog. Stay calm and he probably will too. The dog may sniff you then leave when he realizes you don't want to hurt him.
3. If the dog jumps on you or tries to bite anyway, use a jacket, backpack, basketball or anything you have as a shield. Let the dog bite the shield. Demonstrate this action then have the class practice.
4. If you fall or are knocked down, duck and cover like you would for a school tornado drill. Clasp your hands behind your neck, and pull your elbows in to cover your ears. Go down on your knees, then all the way to the ground with your legs tucked under your body. Your face, ears, neck and legs are very protected. Stay down and "play dead" until the dog leaves, then get up and back slowly out of the area. Demonstrate this action then have the class practice.
5. If you are bitten or scratched, tell an adult. Ask him or her to take care of your wound. Describe what the dog looked like and in which direction he went. An adult can help the animal and keep others in your neighborhood safe.

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Call to Action: Involve students in a role-play. One student will use a puppet and play the role of the dog, and another student will use a puppet to play the role of the human. Have the dog puppet approach the human puppet. Act out the safe things the human should do and the dog's reactions.

Use the following poem/hand motions to remind children that animals that are lost or alone are frightened and need help:

I'm just a lost little dog, as lonely as can be (make a fist of left hand, thumb for head and little finger for tail)

Won't somebody come and be a friend to me? (Right hand moves toward left with walking motion of index and middle fingers; when they meet, enclose fist in right hand)

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IF A STRANGE DOG APPROACHES YOU:

- DON'T RUN
- ACT LIKE A TREE
- BE QUIET
- DON'T WAVE YOUR ARMS OR KICK AT THE DOG
- DON'T STARE AT THE DOG



**BUT, REMEMBER...
NEVER GO NEAR A STRANGE DOG!**

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