

SURPRISES VS. SECRETS



OVERVIEW

In this lesson students will review the rule: “Tell a Trusted Adult” and learn about why secrets may make them less safe, and that there is an important difference between a *surprise* and a *secret*. Students will practice differentiating between surprises and secrets and rehearse how to approach a trusted adult with a secret they want to divulge.



OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Differentiate between a surprise and a secret
- Identify trusted adults to whom they could reveal a secret
- Demonstrate confidence when addressing an adult with a sensitive subject



PROCEDURE

1. **Tell** students: *Today we are going to be talking about surprises and secrets. Ask: Who can define or explain the word “Surprise”? Take student responses until an agreeable definition for “Surprise” has been created.*

Example) Surprise: An unexpected event, fact or thing.

2. **Tell** students: *Surprises are fun and usually make everyone who knows about them joyful! They also get to be revealed after a short time, and there’s no threat or negative consequence if you tell it. For example, it’s a family member’s birthday next weekend, and there is a surprise party planned, so your family asks you not to tell anyone about the birthday party. Ask students:*

- *How do you think your family member will feel when he/she finds out about the party? (Happy, excited)*
- *Is someone asking you never to talk about what you know? (No)*
- *Does knowing this information make you sad, scared or confused? (No)*
- *Is someone threatening you with something bad if you tell? (No)*

After answering these questions, explain to students that in this case, it’s OK not to tell your family member about what they know, because he or she will soon find out and be happy, this is not something they have to keep to themselves forever and knowing about it doesn’t make them feel sad, scared or confused.



MATERIALS

- Attachment 9- Surprise or Secret Sort
- Paper clips or plastic sandwich bags
- Computer connected to an LCD Projector
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- “Tell a Trusted Adult” video



PREPARATION

- Print copies of Attachment 9- Surprise or Secret Sort for each pair of students.
- Cut out each scenario card from Attachment 9 and clip them together or place in a bag, one set of scenarios (ten cards) per pair of students.



NOTE

Many dangerous situations for children involve some element of secrecy. For example, children who bully others will often threaten their victims to keep their actions a “secret”. Sexual perpetrators frequently use similar strategies to keep their victims from disclosing to a trusted adult. This lesson presents an opportunity to teach students to recognize “let’s keep this a secret” as a signal to go get help from a trusted adult.





3. Elicit student examples of other types of surprises. Begin a list of “Surprises!” on the board.

Examples could include:

- Surprise visitor (friend or family member)
- Unexpected gift
- Surprise prank/joke
- Surprise dinner, snack or treat

4. Next, **ask** students: *Has anyone heard the saying “Secrets, secrets, are no fun. Secrets, secrets hurt someone”?* If they have heard the expression, probe their understanding of the saying with questions like:

- *How can a secret hurt someone?* (It can hurt their feelings; it can prevent someone from getting help; It can lead to someone else getting hurt)
- *What do you think is the difference between a “surprise” and a “secret”?* (Surprises make people happy, they are short-term and knowing about them doesn’t make you uncomfortable. Secrets are meant to exclude others, often because the information would cause others to be angry or upset, secrets may involve a threat and secrets have no set end-date)

If students have not heard the “Secrets, secrets...” expression, explain the difference between secrets and surprises. **Tell** students: *Secrets are meant to stop someone from learning about something, usually because if other people found out, they would be mad or sad. Sometimes, a person might ask you to keep a secret forever. Some secrets can make you feel sad, scared, confused or uncomfortable. Sometimes someone will threaten to hurt you or people you care about if you tell a secret. Those are warning signs that this could be a dangerous situation.*

5. **Tell** students: *If someone ever tells you to keep a secret forever, or says “never tell anyone”, that’s a warning sign that you should tell a trusted adult about what you know.* Give the following example:

A friend tells you that whenever he is in the restrooms with this one boy, the boy jumps over the bathroom stall. One time the boy crawled under it and tried to touch your friend’s private parts. The boy told your friend not to tell anyone, otherwise he would beat him up after school.

Ask students:

- *What could be a reason why your friend does not want you to tell anyone about what’s happening?* (He fears the boy will hurt him; He may be embarrassed)
- *What could happen if a trusted adult never finds out about what’s happening?* (The behavior will keep happening; The friend may get hurt; The boy may attempt this behavior with other kids)

6. **Tell** students: *This is a good example of a secret that we should tell a trusted adult about right away. If anyone tries to touch your private parts, or in any other way that makes you uncomfortable, you should tell a trusted adult immediately.*

Let’s watch the “Tell a Trusted Adult” video to review who exactly is a trusted adult that we could go to if we ever needed to reveal a secret.

7. Play the “Tell a Trusted Adult” animated video. After watching the video, **ask** students:

- *What were some examples of trusted adults in the video?* (The teacher, Ms. Johnson; Sam’s dad; Jen’s mom)
- *What were some of the situations that the kids told a trusted adult about?* (A teacher making Jen uncomfortable; kids bullying Marco; Sam feeling scared)





8. Next to the list of “Surprises” on the board, begin a list called “Secrets to TELL” and add the three examples from the video to the list. Elicit other student examples of situations where a secret should be told to a trusted adult. Examples may include:

- Someone is being bullied
- Someone is getting/will be hurt
- Someone feels uncomfortable
- Someone is being touched inappropriately
- Someone is scared

Explain to students that if they know a secret that they realize they should TELL, *it is never too late to tell a trusted adult about what happened.*

9. Pair up students and pass out the pre-cut sets of scenario cards from *Attachment 9- Surprise or Secret Sort*. **Tell** students: *In this activity, there are 8 scenarios and two category cards. Take out the “Secrets to TELL” card and the “Surprises that are 'OK' to Keep” card. With your partner, read through each scenario card and place it into the best category.*

10. After the pairs have finished sorting, have the groups share out to the class why they categorized each card the way they did. Students may find that after hearing the rationale of others they want to recategorize some cards.



FOLLOW-UP

After all eight cards have been sorted, have students take turns role-playing “child who has a secret to tell” and “trusted adult” for the cards categorized in the “Secrets to TELL” category. Each student should practice calmly and confidently revealing this secret to the “trusted adult” partner. After each student has practiced with each secret, they should switch roles.



SURPRISE OR SECRET SORT



You are at the mall with your father. He buys a necklace for your mother that he wants to give to her on her birthday. He asks you not to tell your mom about it.

Your friend tells you that he really likes a girl in your class. He asks you not to tell anyone else.

Your babysitter's boyfriend visited her at your house. You are not supposed to have visitors when your parents are not at home. Your sitter asked you not to tell your parents about the boyfriend's visit.

You and your neighbor are not allowed to go to the corner store without an adult, but your neighbor has started stopping there after getting off the bus after school.

Your soccer team is planning a big party for the coach after your last game, and no one is supposed to mention it in front of her.

Your friend says that her mom's new boyfriend is always rubbing her arm, giving her hugs and kissing her on the cheek. Your friend isn't comfortable with it, but hasn't said anything to an adult about what's happening.

Your friend's brother says he knows a fun "touching game" that he wants to play with you, but it's only for kids, and no adults can know about it.

You are walking past the school on the weekend and see an older girl you know from school break a window of the building. She knows you saw, and tells you not to tell anyone.

Secrets to TELL

Surprises that are "OK" to Keep

