

## Fears, Loneliness, Boredom – Alone and Okay



### Objectives:

Objective 1: Practice safety around the home and personal safety

Objective 2: Practice decision-making skills you would use when staying home alone

Objective 3: Children will develop coping mechanisms for dealing with fear, loneliness and boredom when alone

- To differentiate between fears due to real, possible and imaginary (no) danger.
- To identify a constructive method for dealing with irrational fears when alone.
- Families will discuss the child's feelings about staying alone.
- Children will establish a schedule of varied activities for a future time alone.

### Target Audience:

K-8th grade youth

**Life Skill(s):** Self-Responsibility, Managing Feelings

**Character Focus:** Responsibility

**Delivery Mode:** Group Meeting

**Time Allotted:** 30 minutes

### Materials Needed for the Lesson:

"Is There Danger?" poster, "Danger Game" activity, Educational Leaflets "Talk it Over" Family activity, Worksheet "Lonely/Bored, Things to Do When I'm Home Alone" and "Collections."

**Number of Participants:** 2 to 50

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Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, William R. Richardson, Chancellor, Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, David J. Boethel, Vice Chancellor and Director, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Paul D. Coreil, Vice Chancellor and Director.

One of the concerns about children who care for themselves on a regular basis is that their feelings may be more intense. They may experience more fear. It is important to deal constructively with these fears. Loneliness and boredom, too, can occur because children usually have more difficulty structuring their time in a positive way than adults due to their lack of experience.

When you're alone sounds, thoughts, emotions and fears sometimes seem more magnified. Sometimes fears get the best of us and we have difficulty making good decisions. What is fear like? Everyone is afraid sometimes. Fear can be helpful or not helpful. It can sometimes help avoid danger. It may cause us to avoid undesirable situations. But fear may also cause us to prevent thinking clearly. What's the best way to handle fear? Before you ever stay home alone, you should first discuss things like this with your parents. They can make recommendations on what rules they would like you to follow when you are afraid. One of the first steps they will probably recommend is that you determine whether you are in danger. How do you determine whether a danger is real or just a worry that you have? Let's identify some real dangers.

Many of us have easy access to computers and to the Internet. There are scary things out there in cyberspace as well. Did you know that criminals use the Internet as well as other people? Would you be able to tell a criminal from a person who means you no harm from all the strangers that use the internet? Adults who want to do harm to children sometimes use Internet chat rooms as a means to contact children. They pretend to be children themselves, get children to trust them, "talk" children into revealing personal information about themselves, then try to get the children to agree to meet them. That's when children can become hurt. Think about all the information you share online with your friends. Most of the time you know your friends' screen names and know who you are talking to, but do you realize that strangers can be reading your conversations as well? You have to think about a chat room as a public place, and in that public place whatever you say can be "heard" by everyone around. Do you want everyone to know what you are saying? Even sometimes sharing some information as innocent as what you will be wearing to school the next day can give a person who wants to hurt kids enough information to be able to find you as you leave or enter your school. If someone you have never met asks you to meet them somewhere, there could be a danger. If you feel that this person has really become your friend as you chat online and you feel you really want to meet them, be sure to have your parents along with you. The best policy is to use only chat rooms that you and your parents agree ahead of time seem safe, report to your parents any contact by anyone in the real or virtual world who makes you feel uncomfortable, and don't share ANY personal information with anyone online.

(Display poster "Is There Danger?" Set up individual posters "Real Danger, Possible Danger and No Danger" on walls throughout the room with enough space so that audience can gather near individual posters for activity.)

Let's try an activity where we all try to distinguish whether a situation presents a Real Danger, a Possible Danger or No Danger. (Conduct Danger Game Activity).

If you determine that you are in real danger, the key is to try to stay calm, get out of danger, and get help. If you are in a situation in which you could possibly be in danger, take precautions and follow safety rules. If you are afraid, but you are in no danger it will help calm you if you can keep your mind busy. Talk with your parents about what you can do at home to keep busy and strategies to put your fears to rest.

Some people enjoy being alone while others feel lonely if they are alone. This is sometimes brought about by boredom. Everyone feels this way sometimes. The best way out is to plan to do things. What helps loneliness? Often a friend, phone pal, chatting online, drawing, hobbies, etc. What helps boredom? (Brainstorm about how they've overcome loneliness and boredom, then distribute worksheet "Lonely/Bored, Things to Do When You're Home Alone").

Conclusion:

What are some fears people have about staying home alone? How would you suggest one of your friends deals with such a fear next time they experience it? If your younger brother decides to leave the house to meet friends in the park down the street even though he has been given strict instructions by your parents not to leave the house, is this considered a danger? What should you do?

What do you do when you are home alone and bored or lonely? What would you do if you can't do that?

# IS THERE DANGER?

Real Danger

Possible Danger

No Danger

**Real Danger**

**Possible Danger**

**No Danger**



## Danger Game (Activity)

Instructions to educator:

- Write one of the following phrases on each of three large pieces of paper: “Real Danger”, “Possible Danger”, “No Danger”.
- Place the pieces of paper on the floor about six feet apart.
- Have the children stand at the other end of the room.
- Explain that you will describe a situation and they need to decide if the situation is dangerous to them. If they think they could get hurt if they stayed in the situation they should run to “Real Danger”. If they can’t be hurt, they should run to “No Danger”. If they are not sure if there is danger or if it isn’t dangerous now but could be, they should run to “Possible Danger”.
- Read one of the following situations/objects and have the children go to the spot they think is correct.
- Discuss differences of opinion.
- If children choose the wrong response, be respectful of their responses. Make statements such as “I can see why you might choose that” or “that was a good guess”. Then explain what you think the answer should be and why. Continue with the remaining situations until completed.
- If you have limited space you can modify the game as follows. Copy the attached sheets on three different colored sheets of paper. One color will have the words “Real Danger”, one of the words “Possible Danger”, and the words “No Danger”. Give each child one set of three sheets and have them hold up their response as you read each situation. You will be able to tell by the color of the sheet whether the students are in agreement and have selected the correct response.

1. You are in your house and smell smoke. You see the curtains are on fire. (REAL)

2. Someone you are in a chat room with online asks you to meet them somewhere. (POSSIBLE Danger)

3. Someone comes to the door while you are home alone. (POSSIBLE)

4. You start thinking about ghosts. (NO Danger)

5. Someone calls on the phone while you are gone and asks to talk to your mom. (POSSIBLE)

6. You are watching TV. There is an announcement that a tornado has been sighted in your area. You hear the sirens blow. (REAL)

7. It starts to get dark. (NO)

8. You get a big cut on your knee and can’t stop the bleeding. (REAL)

9. You are walking home alone and a stranger in a car stops and asks for directions. (POSSIBLE)

10. You hear funny noises in the house but everything seems fine. (NO)

11. You are walking home alone after school. Some big kids start to push you around. (REAL)

12. You see a spider on the wall at home. (POSSIBLE – from a child’s point of view.)



## TALK IT OVER: A Family Activity

Try this activity with your family. Together you can discuss how you feel and your family can help you brainstorm how to handle various situations and to create a plan for when you are by yourself.

1. When I'm by myself, I feel: \_\_\_\_\_
2. When I'm by myself, I really like to: \_\_\_\_\_
3. When I'm by myself, I really don't like to: \_\_\_\_\_
4. When I'm by myself, I get scared about: \_\_\_\_\_
5. When I'm by myself, I wish I knew: \_\_\_\_\_
6. When I'm by myself, I wish I could: \_\_\_\_\_
7. When I'm by myself, the best thing is: \_\_\_\_\_
8. When I'm by myself, the worst thing is: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Lonely/Bored Activity Sheet What to Do When You're Home Alone!

Everyone feels lonely sometimes. Being home alone a lot may make you feel lonely but sometimes being lonely and being bored get mixed up.

One way to look at boredom is this. Being bored is a choice and you can choose to make yourself not bored by deciding what to do.

Try a phone friend. One way to feel less lonely is to talk with someone – someone you can visit with over the phone – a friend or relative.

Phone friend

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These are activities that I can do to keep busy and not be bored.

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## Collections



Many kids like collecting things but having a collection means that you save as much of a particular thing as possible. It

can be fun to start accumulating as many different kinds of a specific thing as you can find, especially if it is available but also not that easy to find. Sounds a bit tricky huh? It might not be a great idea to start a seashell collection while you live in Iowa, unless you course, you take frequent trips to the ocean.

One thing that happens with collections is that as you begin to collect you may decide to specialize even more. For example, you may start collecting

postcards and then find that that's too easy and decide to specialize in postcards with pictures of bridges.

One of the things about collections is that usually you want to share your collection with other people – show it to them. It's a good idea to think about ways to store and display the pieces you collect. Notebooks, scrapbooks, or albums may be good for flat collections such as pictures, stamps, postcards, leaves, and match covers. Larger objects may need to be stored in boxes. Think about storing and displaying your collection as part of the process of having a collection.

The following are just some ideas of things that kids collect. You may get an idea from here or take off with an idea of your own.

Menus	Bottle Caps	Dolls
Greeting Cards	Posters	Cash Register Slips
Buttons	Maps	Stamps
Photographs	Butterflies	Shells
Insects	Autographs	Match Covers (With Matches Removed)
Leaves	Postcards	Drinking Straw Wrappers

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