

# Safety Awareness



*Children with a limited experience of life when faced with a frightening situation display a natural human natural instinct of fight or flight. This may explain why some children may feel threatened and become aggressive or they withdraw or run away.*

## What are the common difficulties?

- Lack of awareness
- Expecting carers to keep them safe
- Not understanding that actions have consequences

## What are the issues?

- Children may see only the immediate picture, they cannot think through consequences
- Children may not be able to use existing skills in a new situation
- Children may not have the words to express how they feel
- Too much unstructured time might encourage children to explore areas that could potentially be dangerous
- Some children react badly to, too much stimulation eg too noisy, too cluttered, too bright
- Children may not have the play skills to be able to keep themselves occupied
- Children will respond according to their stage of development which isn't necessarily the same as their age



## How can we help?

- Observe and assess the child
- Teach the next skills for their stage of development
- If you make changes take time to explain/show them to the children
- Arrange for parent/staff training
- Encourage children's independence
- Don't do everything for them
- Encourage them to communicate for their wants and needs
- Constantly offer children choices
- Enforce rules using key words avoiding negatives so instead of 'no running' say 'walk'
- Reinforce using picture symbols
- At danger times use avoidance and distraction eg point out things in the environment or encourage children to do action rhymes
- Respond appropriately eg if you are cross with children for running away they may not want to return
- Use a social story to teach how to avoid a particular danger eg why children shouldn't run onto the road
- If you identify a dangerous behaviour provide the child with an appropriate replacement behaviour
- Use story books, role play, puppets and small world play to explore dangerous situations. Discuss the situation and elicit the child's view
- Carry out environmental checks and ask the child to help you
- Be aware that autistic children often have no sense of danger