



Conversation Menu

TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES AND OTHERS IN PUBLIC SPACES

APPETISER

During secondary school, young people navigate a period of significant growth and development characterised by establishing independence, building self-confidence and developing important life skills. A part of that process is being granted the freedom to go out independently in the community where learning to take care of yourself and others is important.



ENTREE

This is a time where parents and carers may be trying to find the perfect balance between giving young people the freedom to make their own choices and do things independently while establishing boundaries to keep them safe.

The following list outlines some common independent activities that become a part of a young person's journey to autonomy, often in their secondary school years. As a family, reflect on the following situations and share your thinking with each other about how comfortable you are with these activities: when do you think it's appropriate for young people to engage in them without adults present? Remember – the answers are different for everyone, and every family, and that's okay! The important thing is to be open and talk about how you feel.

Activities to consider:

- Walking to school
- Using public transport
- Being out in public during the day and at night
- Going to a friend's celebration
- Eating dinner with friends outside of the home
- Going to the shopping centre with friends
- Going to a movie

MAIN

Having conversations with our young people about how to engage in pro-social behaviours and practise self-care when out independently in public is integral to supporting them to manage boundaries while building the agency, confidence and self-esteem of our young people.

Practising self-care and prosocial behaviour in the community may involve:

- Showing care and concern for yourself and others when out in the community
- Being respectful of public property
- Taking care of your belongings and being aware of your environment and surroundings
- Creating healthy and safe habits and routines like letting your parents and friends know where you are going
- Engaging in activities with other people rather than alone
- Road safety, whether you are on foot, in the car or on transport

Continue the conversation in your family by exploring the following questions together.

Suggested questions:

- How do I take care of myself when out independently?
- What should I do if I feel uncomfortable or unsafe?
- Who are the adults you can talk to, get help from and trust?
 - someone at school
 - people in the community (local sports centre)
 - someone at home
- What should I do with my personal belongings when going to and from school?
- How am I making sure I am taking care of my personal belongings and being aware of my surroundings?
- Looking out for peers in the community - what to do if I see a friend upset?

DESSERT

A part of building your confidence, independence and overall pro-social behaviour may involve building supportive relationships in the community and identifying appropriate adults to seek out if a person ever feels uncomfortable, unsafe or in urgent need of support when out in public.

Encourage your child to develop a list of contacts they can easily access if in need of support. They might store them as favourites on their mobile phone or keep a record of their numbers in their school planner. The act of recording these details can help encourage young people to reach out when appropriate.

LEFTOVERS

Tips for practising self-care in the community:

1. Let your friends and parents know where you are going- be responsible.
2. Look out for your friends- express care.
3. Being aware of your own personal space and that of others- respect.
4. Develop assertiveness skills in public- it's okay to say no.

Resources:

Heads Up, Phones Down Sign

<https://www.safekids.org/other-resource/heads-phones-down-sign>

School Zone Infographic

<https://www.safekids.org/infographic/school-zone-infographic>

Safety for Teens

https://www.safekids.org/safetytips/field_age/teens-15%E2%80%9319-years

