



MODULE 7:

National Safe Connections

Learning Goals

During this module, participants will:

- ◆ Brainstorm stressors that affect youth, including challenges a youth may encounter as a runaway.
- ◆ Discuss what safety means to each individual and identify his or her personal safe place.
- ◆ Learn about Project Safe Place and how the program can assist youth in crisis across the country.

MODULE 7: NATIONAL SAFE CONNECTIONS

DEFINE THE ISSUE

“Both National Safe Place and the National Runaway Switchboard have a common mission: connecting youth to help and safety.”

National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) and National Safe Place (NSP) are two organizations with rich histories of supporting youth and families in crisis. The National Safe Connections collaboration is the result of the two organizations joining forces in 2002 to provide a safety net of services for at-risk youth. The collaboration hopes to heighten awareness of the two organizations and of the plight of youth in crisis and services available to youth and their families across the country.

The collaboration’s goals include educating youth about NRS services and Safe Place locations available as resources in crisis situations, increasing the number of youth that seek help rather than trying to resolve serious problems on their own, and educating youth-serving agencies about NRS and National Safe Place.

Module 7 will teach participants about National Safe Place as they define what a safe place looks and feels like to them as individuals.

ICONS:

For further details, see the Introduction Module.



MODULE 7: NATIONAL SAFE CONNECTIONS

MODULE ACTIVITIES



ACTIVITY	TIME	METHODOLOGY
A. A Heavy Load To Carry	10 minutes	Discussion/Exercise
B. A Safe Place	10 minutes	Discussion/Exercise
C. Safe Place Readers Theater	25 minutes	Discussion/Exercise



Total time required: **45 minutes**



MATERIALS

- ◆ Laundry basket
- ◆ Students' textbooks
- ◆ Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- ◆ "A Safe Place" worksheet
- ◆ Copy and highlight each youth's part of the "Safe Place Readers Theater" handout (seven total)
- ◆ "Safe Place Logo" sheet



Runaway Reality + Community Response and Responsibility



The companion film "1-800-RUNAWAY" works well with this module.



Before using this module, please visit www.nationalsafeplace.org or call the National Runaway Switchboard at (773) 289.1723 to find the Safe Place program in your area. If you are in a Safe Place community, you might contact the Safe Place Coordinator to visit your group and lead this module. She or he can bring student information wallet cards containing local Safe Place information.



If your community is not a Safe Place community, and you'd like to find out more about bringing Project Safe Place to your area, contact the National Safe Place office at (502) 635.3660 or visit www.nationalsafeplace.org.



MODULE 7: NATIONAL SAFE CONNECTIONS

ACTIVITY 7A. A HEAVY LOAD TO CARRY

10 minutes



- INTRODUCE** the activity.
- STATE** *As you all know, adolescence is a time of change and growth. For many, it's also a time of choices and stressors. Each of us may face a time when stressors weigh on us too heavily and we find ourselves in a crisis situation.*
- ASK** *Would someone like to volunteer to help me with a brief demonstration?*
- SELECT** a volunteer and have him or her come to the front of the room. Give the volunteer a laundry basket to hold.
- STATE** *We're going to demonstrate how stressful some situations can become. Can anyone name a stressor in a youth's world?*
- DIRECT** the activity. When a participant names a stressor, have him or her put a textbook in the laundry basket. The basket will become heavier with each "stressor" until it becomes difficult for the volunteer to hold.
- STATE** *When someone is burdened by many stressors, a crisis may occur. In this situation, we'll pretend that (volunteer's name) has decided to run away from the place (he or she) considers home.*
- ASK** *What stressors might our volunteer experience as a runaway?*
- ALLOW** 1-2 minutes for participants to respond.
- ASK** *What are some examples of help available to our volunteer before, after, or during the time (she or he) is a runaway?*
- DIRECT** participants to remove their textbooks from the laundry basket when they name a resource.
- STATE** *The amount of stress each of us can handle will be different. While one person may be in a crisis after many stressors have come his or her way, another person may need only one stressor before he or she finds him or herself unable to function. Each of us has a different tolerance to stress and different ways of coping with it.*
- We can lighten our loads by accessing help. The help may be informal and vary from one person to another. For example, we may have people we can talk to when we are having a bad day or have hobbies that help us cope. Help may also be formal and be available to nearly anyone who needs it, such as counseling or health care.*
- We're going to learn about two formal resources today: National Safe Place and the National Runaway Switchboard, at 1-800-RUNAWAY.*
- ASK** *Do you have any questions or comments?*
- DISCUSS** responses.



MODULE 7: NATIONAL SAFE CONNECTIONS

ACTIVITY 7B. A SAFE PLACE

10 minutes



INTRODUCE

the topic of safety.

STATE

People deserve to feel safe in their daily lives. But safety means different things to different people. For instance, one person may feel safe when surrounded by other people. On the other hand, someone who feels anxious in crowds may feel safer alone.

The National Runaway Switchboard is committed to helping youth feel safe in their everyday lives. When a young person calls 1-800-RUNAWAY, the NRS frontline team member or liner will make certain that the youth is in a "safe place" before continuing with the crisis call. NRS believes it is difficult for someone to focus on the issue at hand if he or she does not feel safe.

HAND OUT

"A Safe Place" worksheets and something with which the participants may draw.

STATE

You have the right to feel safe at all times. Today we're going to consider what a "safe place" means to each of you. Please draw a picture of a place that you consider to be a safe place. If it is more comfortable to use words to describe your safe place, that is fine too. We're going to take about 5 minutes to do this.

ALLOW

5 minutes for participants to complete the activity.

ASK

Who would like to share his or her drawing by showing it to the rest of the group?

ALLOW

volunteers to show their drawings. While they do so, ask them the following questions:

ASK

- *What makes this place safe for you?*
- *Are there people who make this place safe for you?*
- *When might you need or use a safe place?*
- *How would you feel if you didn't have a safe place?*

DISCUSS

participants' responses.

STATE

Each of us deserves to have a safe place that we can go if we're feeling threatened, being abused or neglected, or are having problems that seem too difficult to handle. We're now going to talk about a national program called Project Safe Place that offers places like these to youth across the country.

ASK

Do you have any questions or comments?

DISCUSS

responses.



MODULE 7: NATIONAL SAFE CONNECTIONS

ACTIVITY 7C. SAFE PLACE READER'S THEATER

25 minutes



If you are in a Safe Place community, you may choose to show a Safe Place video rather than lead this activity.



Prior to this activity, you may want to determine who will be the readers for this activity. Or, you may choose to ask for six to seven volunteers.

HAND OUT

"Safe Place Reader's Theater Script" to the readers and have them stand in front of the class.

STATE

As we've discovered, it is important for youth to have a safe place they feel they can go to in times of need. We're going to learn about a national program that provides youth in crisis with just that—a Safe Place.

HAVE

the readers perform the script for the participants. When they have finished, allow the readers to return to their seats.

ASK

- *According to the skit, why does Safe Place exist?*
- *Who can summarize what Safe Place is?*
- *How would you use it?*
- *What are some reasons the youth in this skit chose to run?*

DISCUSS

responses.

STATE

Project Safe Place is a national program that began in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1983. Safe Place started as an outreach program for youth who needed immediate help because they were in danger due to abuse, neglect or serious family problems they could not handle. The youth would call for help, but they had no transportation to the shelter.

Currently, Safe Place is currently available in thirty-nine states. Keep an eye out for the sign if you travel to another state. And know that you can always stop in a business or agency with the Safe Place sign should you need assistance.*

(This number is subject to change. 2007 statistics.)

ASK

Are there any questions?

DISCUSS

responses.

IF YOU ARE IN A SAFE PLACE COMMUNITY:

STATE

Safe Place began in this city about ____ years ago, and there are _____ Safe Place sites currently operating.

Where have you seen the Safe Place sign around the community?

ADD

The names of any businesses not yet mentioned that display Safe Place signs.



safe connections

STATE

Project Safe Place has partnered with the National Runaway Switchboard to create the National Safe Connections collaboration. Runaways or youth in crisis can call 1-800-RUNAWAY and speak with a trained liner about any issue. Even if you can't find a Safe Place, you can always call this hotline.

ASK

Do you have any questions or comments?

DISCUSS

responses.



MODULE 7: NATIONAL SAFE CONNECTIONS

SUMMARY

STATE

- *Adolescence is a time of change and growth which can create many choices and stressors. Each of us may have stressors and find ourselves in a crisis situation.*
- *The amount of stress each of us can handle will be different.*
- *We can lighten our loads by accessing help. The help may be informal and vary from one person to another.*
- *People deserve to feel safe in their daily lives, but this can mean different things to different people.*
- *Project Safe Place is a national program for youth who need immediate help because they are in danger due to abuse, neglect or serious family problems they cannot handle.*
- *Safe Places are businesses and agencies in the community displaying the distinctive yellow and black diamond sign where runaways can go to get help.*
- *The National Runaway Switchboard is committed to helping youth feel safe every day. When a young person calls 1-800-RUNAWAY, the crisis liner makes certain that the youth is in a "safe place" before continuing with the call. NRS believes it is difficult to focus on the issue if the caller does not feel safe.*
- *Project Safe Place has partnered with the National Runaway Switchboard to create the National Safe Connections collaboration.*



MODULE 7: NATIONAL SAFE CONNECTIONS

HANDOUTS AND WORKSHEETS

- A. A Safe Place
- B. Safe Place Readers Theater
- C. Safe Place Logo

REFERENCES

National Runaway Switchboard (2001). *Runaway Prevention Curriculum For Classroom and Community Educators*, Chicago, IL: NRS

Safe Place provides access to immediate help and supportive resources for all young people in crisis through a network of sites sustained by qualified agencies, trained volunteers, and businesses. The website offers information about the program, how to start a program and safe place locations (<http://nationalsafeplace.org>).

RESOURCES

National Runaway Switchboard is the federally-designated national communication system (hotline and website) for runaway and homeless youth. Youth and family members call 1-800-RUNAWAY or access the website to work through problems and to find local help (<http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org>).

Safe Place provides access to immediate help and supportive resources for all young people in crisis through a network of sites sustained by qualified agencies, trained volunteers, and businesses (<http://nationalsafeplace.org>).



A SAFE PLACE

Directions: Please draw a picture of a place you consider to be a safe place. If you are more comfortable using words to describe your safe place, that is fine too.

a safe place

Need to talk? Call us.
1-800-RUNAWAY
National Runaway Switchboard
www.1800RUNAWAY.org

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SAFE PLACE READERS THEATER SCRIPT

Narrator – Today we would like to answer the question, what is Safe Place? We interviewed young people around the country and received many different responses.

Youth stand in order in a line at the front of the room.

YOUTH 1: Safe Place?

YOUTH 2: I think my cousin went to one of those once but I forget how it works.

YOUTH 1: I guess it's a place that's safe. I don't know.

YOUTH 3: Oh yeah, yellow and black signs right?

YOUTH 4: I see those signs all over town.

YOUTH 5: They taught us about Safe Place in school

YOUTH 4: I always wondered. What is it, like a club or something?

YOUTH 6: It's where you go when you're having problems or are in some kind of trouble, you know, like at home or at school.

The youth make a line and pass by the Narrator, interrupting as they give their statements in turn.

Narrator: To every young person -

YOUTH 1: I'm locked out.

Narrator: who needs a Safe Place,

YOUTH 2: I ran away.

Narrator: I just want to say a few words.

YOUTH 3: I have no place to go.

Narrator: Always remember you're not alone.

YOUTH 4: He threatened to jump me.



SAFE PLACE READERS THEATER SCRIPT (page 2)

Narrator: Someone was once standing where you are now.

YOUTH 5: The driver was drunk.

Narrator: Someone was once struggling with the same problem.

YOUTH 6: I'm being followed.

Narrator: Yes, life can be hard but everyone has to -

YOUTH 1: She hits me.

Narrator: face challenges, right? And everyone -

YOUTH 2: He touches me.

Narrator: needs someone that will back them up.

YOUTH 3: They're doing drugs.

Narrator: You can make life better -

YOUTH 4: We're always fighting.

Narrator: just don't be afraid to ask for help -

YOUTH 5: I'm afraid of what they'll do.

Narrator: because you're not alone.

YOUTH 6: I feel unsafe...I just need to talk.

Youth stand still and in a line at the front of the room.

Narrator: When there's trouble...

YOUTH 1: Life can be tough when you're growing up. What do you do when there's a problem at home? You don't want to stay but you don't have anywhere else to go.



SAFE PLACE READERS THEATER SCRIPT (page 3)

Narrator: There is something you can do.

YOUTH 2: Don't just run. Think about it, friends can't support you forever and being on the street gets you nothing but trouble. So what do you do?

Narrator: Find a Safe Place (*show Safe Place sign print out*).

YOUTH 3: You've probably seen the signs; they have them all over the country at fire stations, convenience stores, fast food restaurants and sometimes city buses. A Safe Place can get you to a place to sleep and someone to talk to about your problems.

Narrator: Walk in.

YOUTH 4: You don't need to plan or pack or anything. When things get bad, all you have to do is take that first step, walk in that door and someone is going to help you the rest of the way.

Narrator: Ask for help.

YOUTH 5: Don't worry, you're not expected to tell your whole story right there in public. All you have to say is, "I need a Safe Place." It's easy and confidential.

Narrator: Talk with a volunteer.

YOUTH 6: A volunteer will come to listen and support you. You can tell them the situation and they'll help you figure out what to do next so that you stay safe.

Narrator: A place to stay.

YOUTH 1: If you want, they'll bring you to a shelter. There are people that care about you first. So feel free to tell them what's on your mind. They'll call your parents to let them know that you're okay, but you can stay here while you work things out.

YOUTH 2: Anytime you're in a situation that doesn't feel right, do the smart thing and take action for yourself - go to a Safe Place.

YOUTH 3: It's good knowing that I have a place to go.



SAFE PLACE READERS THEATER SCRIPT (page 4)

YOUTH 1: Safe Place is a really cool idea. I mean it sounds great.

YOUTH 6: Yeah, a lady came to our school and went on and on about, 'If you ever need help, no matter how small you think your problem is....' I didn't really pay much attention because I never thought I'd need it, but she gave us these cards....

YOUTH 2: I remember my cousin and his mom would get into these huge arguments where she'd be like 'I don't want you hanging around those people; you're grounded for a month' and he'd be like 'I hate you, I'm leaving.'

YOUTH 6: ...Then one night I was out really late with my friends and they all started drinking - I didn't want to ride home with them but I didn't want to be stranded either...I still had that card... and I went to a Safe Place.

YOUTH 2: I'm glad my cousin didn't leave for good. He found a Safe Place instead and I guess it gave him and his mom a chance to work it out. When he came home he started back up with his band, just like before.

YOUTH 5: I think Safe Place sounds great. I'd much rather be safe, have a bed, have food and be able to go to school with my friends. I mean, wouldn't anyone want that?

YOUTH 3: I think I'll tell my friends about Safe Place - definitely my little sister.

YOUTH 4: Yeah, you know I'll keep it in mind. Because you never know when you might need it? Right? I mean if something's up at home or something's going down on the street, I'll just find the sign and take care of myself.

Narrator: Whatever the situation, things can be better.

Narrator and ALL YOUTH: Go to a Safe Place.



SAFE PLACE LOGO



Module 7: National Safe Connections Pre and Post-Activity Worksheet

Initials:

Directions: Please put your initials at the top of the page and circle "pre" if you are taking the test before class or "post" if you are taking the test after class. Answer the following questions to the best of your ability!

What is your **gender:** _____ **Race/ethnicity:** _____ **Age:** _____

- Some stressors a youth might deal with in his or her life include _____.
 - family
 - friends
 - dating
 - all of the above
- "Safety" means the same thing to all people.
 - True
 - False
- What colors are the Safe Place sign?
 - Green and black
 - Yellow and blue
 - Yellow and black
 - Green and blue
- Safe Place is currently available in _____.
 - less than 20 U.S. states
 - 20-30 U.S. states
 - more than 30 U.S. states
 - only in Canada
- Youth can reach the National Runaway Switchboard by calling 1-800-_____.
 - DON'T GO
 - STAY SAFE
 - LUDACRIS
 - RUNAWAY
- Safe Place sites will _____.
 - have a visible Safe Place sign
 - connect you to local help
 - connect you with a safe place to go in a crisis
 - all of the above
- Our community has a Safe Place program.
 - True
 - False
- Which is an example of where a Safe Place can be located?
 - In a firehouse
 - Convenience store
 - Fast food restaurants
 - All of the above
- If you would like to get more information about Safe Place, go to _____.
 - www.safeplaceforteens.com
 - safety.org
 - nationalplaces.org
 - www.help.com
- The National Runaway Switchboard and Safe Place have a common mission to connect youth to help and safety.
 - True
 - False

