

MODULE

11

“let’s talk”

NATIONAL SAFE CONNECTIONS



LEARNING GOALS

During this module, participants will:

- Brainstorm stressors that affect youth, including challenges a youth may encounter if they run away.
- Discuss what safety means to each individual and determine their personal safe place.
- Learn about Safe Place and how the program can assist youth in crisis across the country.

DEFINE THE ISSUE

Both National Safe Place Network (NSPN) and the National Runaway Safeline (NRS) have a common mission: connecting youth to resources and safety.

The National Safe Place Network and National Runaway Safeline have 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 youth in crisis. The collaboration hopes to heighten awareness of the two organizations, 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, thereby increasing the number of youth that seek help rather than trying to resolve serious problems on their own, as well as educating youth-serving agencies about NRS and National Safe Place Network. Module 11 will teach participants about the National Safe Place Network as they define what a safe place looks and feels like to them as individuals.

ICONS

For further details, see the Introduction Module.



MODULE ACTIVITIES



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

Total time required: **45 minutes**

MATERIALS

- An empty bag or backpack
- Students' textbooks
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- "A Safe Place" worksheet
- "Safe Place Readers Theater Script" handout (copy and highlight each youth's part [six or seven total])
- "Safe Place Logo" sheet



Realities of Running Away + Community Response and Responsibility



Consider showing the companion film, *American Street Kid*.



Contact the NRS Prevention & Youth Engagement Coordinator at **773-289-1723** or **prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org** for support and technical assistance.



Before using this module, please visit **www.nationalsafeplace.org**, to find the Safe Place program in your area. If you are in a Safe Place community, you might ask the Safe Place Coordinator to visit your group and lead this module. They 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 Safe Place to your area, contact the National Safe Place Network office at **502-635-3660**, or visit **www.nationalsafeplace.org**.

ACTIVITY 11A

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 too heavily on us 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 them come to the front of the room. Give the volunteer an empty bag or backpack to hold.

STATE We're going to demonstrate how stressful some situations can become. Can anyone name a stressor a young person might experience?

DIRECT the activity. When a participant names a stressor, have them put a textbook in the bag or backpack. 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 they consider 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 that might be available to our volunteer before, after, or during the time they are a runaway?

DIRECT participants to remove their textbooks from the bag or 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 their way, another person may need only one stressor before it becomes difficult 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 may 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, such as counseling or healthcare.

We're going to learn about two formal resources today: Safe Place and the National Runaway Safeline.

ASK Do you have any questions or comments?

DISCUSS responses.

ACTIVITY 11B

A SAFE PLACE



10 minutes



If time allows, give participants more time to create and discuss the activity below.

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 Safeline is committed to helping youth feel safe in their everyday lives. When a young person contacts 1-800-RUNAWAY, the NRS frontline team member will make certain the youth is in a “safe place” before continuing to discuss the crisis. NRS believes it is difficult for someone to focus on the issue at hand if they do not feel safe.

HAND OUT “A Safe Place” worksheets and crayons, colored pencils, or markers 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 you consider to be a safe place. If you would feel more comfortable using 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 their 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 to if we are 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 Safe Place that offers places like these to youth across the country.

ASK Do you have any questions or comments?

DISCUSS responses.

A SAFE PLACE

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



ACTIVITY 11C

SAFE PLACE READERS 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 Readers 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 can go 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

Safe Place is a national youth outreach and prevention program for youth in need of immediate help and safety. Over 20,000 community and business locations nationwide display the yellow and black Safe Place sign, making help readily available. Safe Place locations include libraries, YMCAs, fire stations, public transportation vehicles, convenience stores, and social service facilities. In 1983, Safe Place began as an outreach program of the YMCA Shelter House in Louisville, Kentucky. Access to emergency counseling and shelter for youth was determined to be a community need, and the YMCA addressed the issue with the addition of the Safe Place program.

Currently, Safe Place is available in forty 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. You can also use TXT 4 HELP, a textfor- support service available 24/7. Just text the word “Safe” to 4HELP (44537) and enter your location to receive the nearest Safe Place location or respond with “2Chat” to text one-on-one with a counselor.



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.

STATE Safe Place has partnered with the National Runaway Safeline to create the National Safe Connections collaboration. You can call or text 1-800-RUNAWAY or chat online at 1800RUNAWAY.org to speak with someone confidentially about any issue.

ASK Do you have any questions or comments?

DISCUSS responses.

SAFE PLACE READERS THEATER SCRIPT (PAGE 1)



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.

SAFE PLACE READERS THEATER SCRIPT (PAGE 2)



YOUTH 4 He threatened to jump me.

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 . . .

SAFE PLACE READERS THEATER SCRIPT (PAGE 3)



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.

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 printed Safe Place Logo*).

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 there while you work things out.

SAFE PLACE READERS THEATER SCRIPT (PAGE 4)



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.

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 &
ALL YOUTH** Go to a Safe Place.



ACTIVITY 11

SUMMARY

- STATE**
- Adolescence is a time of change and growth, which can create many choices and stressors. Each of us may have stressors and may 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 may vary from one person to another.
 - People deserve to feel safe in their daily lives, but this can mean different things to different people.
 - Safe Place is a national program for youth who need immediate help because of any number of crises, like bullying, being locked out, or serious family problems they cannot handle.
 - Designated Safe Place locations display the distinctive yellow and black sign where youth in crisis can go to get help.
 - Safe Place offers TXT 4 HELP, a nationwide text-for-support service available 24/7. Youth can text “Safe” to 4HELP (44537) and enter their location to receive the nearest Safe Place location or respond with “2Chat” to immediately text one-on-one with a counselor.
 - The National Runaway Safeline is committed to helping youth feel safe every day. When a young person contacts NRS through 1-800-RUNAWAY or 1800RUNAWAY.org, a staff member or volunteer makes certain the youth is in a “safe place” before continuing to discuss the crisis. NRS believes it is difficult to focus on the issue if the youth does not feel safe.
 - Safe Place has partnered with the National Runaway Safeline to create the National Safe Connections collaboration.

HANDOUTS AND WORKSHEETS

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

REFERENCES

National Runaway Switchboard. (2001). *Runaway prevention curriculum for classroom and community educators*. Chicago, IL: NRS.

RESOURCES

National Runaway Safeline (NRS) works to keep America's runaway, homeless and at-risk youth safe and off the streets. NRS operates the 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline (call and text) and 1800RUNAWAY.org online services, including live chat, email and forums. NRS provides youth and families in crisis with support and access to resources 24 hours a day, 365 days a year (www.1800RUNAWAY.org).

National Safe Place Network (NSPN) envisions a world where all youth are safe. It is their mission to ensure an effective system of response for youth in crisis through public and private partnerships at a local, state, and national level (www.nspnetwork.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 (www.nationalsafeplace.org).