BUCOVERY

Dharma First Aid Kit for Children

Buddhist stories and activities for big feelings

Read on your own or with a grown-up you trust

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GET HELP

When You Need a Grown Up Now

If someone hurts you or threatens you, or you think you might hurt yourself or someone else, find a safe grown-up right away. A teacher, school counselor, or trusted neighbor may be able to help.

Say it or show it

“I need help now. I don’t feel safe.” You can say the words, write them, or point to this page. If one grown-up doesn’t help, keep telling other safe grown-ups until someone helps.

When someone is in danger right now

Move away from danger if you can. Get a grown-up. In the United States, if someone is in immediate danger and you can safely use a phone, call 911. Tell them where you are and what is happening. Follow their directions.

Grown-ups are responsible for helping keep you safe. You can ask for help even if someone told you to keep a secret.

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How to Use This Kit

Sometimes a feeling shows up fast. You might get hot when you’re mad, feel shaky when you’re scared, or want to hide when you’re embarrassed. This kit gives you things to try and words to use when you need help.

Read it with a grown-up you trust. You can point to a page, draw an answer, or ask them to read it to you. Try the activities when you’re having an ordinary day so you can remember them when a big feeling comes.

In these pages, Dharma means practicing how to notice, be kind, and make choices that keep people safe.

CHILDREN

Find the Name of Your Feeling

Imagine getting to the playground and seeing that your friend has already started a game with someone else. You might feel left out, mad, or worried they forgot you. More than one feeling can show up at once.

Try these words

Mad · sad · scared · worried · lonely · glad · mixed up

Say a word that might fit. If you can’t tell, “I feel mixed up” is enough. You can point to a word or draw a face.

I think I feel…

Something that happened just before the feeling was…

CHILDREN

My Body Gives Me Clues

Your body might give you a clue before you find a word. Your face could get hot. Your tummy could feel tight. Your hands could turn into fists.

Find one clue

Think about a small feeling from today. Where did you feel it? Touch that spot if you want to, or draw it on a stick figure. Tell a grown-up if your body hurts or you feel sick.

Pair the clue with a choice

If your hands curl up, try opening them and taking a step back. If you want to hide, ask a safe grown-up to sit nearby.

Draw or write one clue you notice in your body.

What could you ask for when you feel it?

CHILDREN

Find Three Things

This is a game you can play when your mind is busy. Keep your eyes open if that feels good to you.

Look or listen

Find three things you can see. They can be plain things, like a sock, a lamp, and a book. Choose one thing and describe its color or shape. If you'd rather listen, find two sounds instead.

Try it with someone

Ask a grown-up to name one thing they notice, then take your turn. If you want to move, walk together and look for one thing near you and one thing farther away.

Three things I noticed…

CHILDREN

When I Feel Really Mad

Jay was building a tower when his cousin knocked it down. His hands wanted to push. Jay put the block down and moved back. “I’m mad. I need help,” he told his aunt.

Give your hands a safe job

Set down what you’re holding. Put your hands on your own knees or push your palms together gently. Take a step away if you have room.

Tell someone what happened

Try “I was still using those blocks.” If you feel like you might hurt someone or someone is hurting you, go to a safe grown-up right away.

What can your hands do when you are really mad?

CHILDREN

When I Feel Scared

Sometimes a loud sound or a scary picture makes your body jump. First, look for a safe grown-up who can help you find out what's happening.

Ask one question

"Can you tell me what that noise was?" Or say, "Can you stay here with me?" If there is danger, follow the grown-up's directions to get somewhere safer.

Notice one safe thing nearby

Once you're in a safe place, feel the chair or notice something familiar. If you're still scared, tell the grown-up what would help. You can ask them to sit close or give you room.

A grown-up I can ask to stay with me…

CHILDREN

When Worry Keeps Asking What If

Before school, Mia kept thinking, “What if I forget my turn in the play?” She asked her teacher where to look if she forgot. Her teacher showed her the cue card.

Find one thing you can do

Tell a safe grown-up your worry. Together, look for one step you can take now. If you’re worried about a spelling test, you could practice two words or ask the teacher how the test works.

Set the worry down for a little while

Draw it or write it down and leave the paper somewhere safe. Choose one thing to do next, like eat breakfast or pack your bag. You can ask for more help if the worry keeps getting in the way.

My worry and one small step…

CHILDREN

When I Feel Sad

Sadness can feel heavy. You might want to cry, sit quietly, or be near somebody. Tell a grown-up you trust, especially if sadness keeps making it hard to play, sleep, or do schoolwork.

Pick a kind thing

Sit with a favorite blanket. Ask someone to read with you. Or draw what happened and show the picture when you're ready.

Use a few words

"I'm sad today. Can I sit by you?" If you don't know what made you sad, you can say that too.

When I'm sad, one thing I would like a grown-up to do is…

When I Miss Someone

After someone dies or moves away, you may miss them at surprising times. Sam missed his old dog every time he came home and reached for the leash.

Make space for a memory

Draw something you used to do together. Tell a story to a safe grown-up, or ask if they have a memory to share. If you want company while you remember, ask for it.

Let the day have other moments too

You can miss someone at breakfast and laugh later in the day. If a question about what happened keeps coming up, you can ask it again.

Draw or write one thing you want to remember.

CHILDREN

When I Feel Left Out

You walk up to a game and nobody makes room. That can hurt. You can ask clearly for a turn, find someone else to play with, or ask a grown-up for help.

Try a question

“Can I join the next round?” If the answer is no, look for another person or activity. A teacher can help you find a place to join in.

Tell a grown-up if someone keeps picking on you

Say what happened and when. “They call me names at recess and tell me to go away every day.” If someone threatens or hurts you, get help right away.

One way I can ask to join…

CHILDREN

When Someone Is Mean Online

A mean message or a scary photo can make it hard to think. You can stop looking at the screen and take the device to a safe grown-up.

Ask them to help with the next step

Say, “I got something online that scared me. Can you help?” The grown-up can decide how to report or block it. Leave any upsetting images or messages for them to handle.

Tell again if you’re worried

If someone asks for a private picture, threatens you, or tells you to keep a secret from your safe grown-ups, show or tell a grown-up right away. You can ask for help even if you already replied.

Who could I show a message to?

CHILDREN

When I Make a Mistake

Nora knocked over the paint and blamed her brother. Later she told the truth. “I spilled it. I said you did it because I was scared. I’m sorry.”

Say what happened

Try “I grabbed the marker from you. I’m sorry.” Then ask what would help, or offer one thing you can do, like giving it back.

Practice the next choice

You can say “Can I use it when you’re done?” Practice once with a grown-up or a stuffed animal. If someone needs time before they want to talk again, give them space.

Something I can say when I want to make things right…

CHILDREN

When I Need to Say Stop

Your body belongs to you. You can say “Stop,” “I need space,” or “I’m going to get help.” If speaking feels hard, you can move away when it’s safe and tell someone afterward.

Practice with a safe grown-up

Stand or sit a comfortable distance apart. Say “Please back up.” Ask the grown-up to show how they listen by stepping back. You can also practice pointing to a written message.

Tell someone if the person keeps going

Get to a safe grown-up. Explain what the person did, even if it was someone you know. Keep telling safe grown-ups until one helps.

A sentence I can use…

My Safe Grown Ups

Make this page with a grown-up you trust. Choose people who listen to you and take action when you need help. Pick someone you can find at school and someone you can reach away from school.

A safe grown-up at school and where to find them…

A safe grown-up away from school and how to reach them…

Another person I can tell if the first person can’t help…

Practice one sentence

“I need to tell you something important. Can you listen now?” You can write it on a card or ask your grown-up to help you practice saying it.

CHILDREN

When Plans Change

The park trip got canceled. Jo felt mad because she'd been looking forward to the swings all week. Her dad said, "You really wanted to go. Do you want a minute or help making a new plan?"

Say what you wanted

"I wanted to see my friend." It's okay to feel disappointed. Let your grown-up know if you'd like some time before you choose something else.

Find one piece you can keep

Maybe you can call your friend, ask when you'll see them next, or choose one thing you'd like to do at home. If you need help picking, ask for two choices.

A change that felt hard…

One thing that helped me get through it…

CHILDREN

A Kind Wish for Myself

In Buddhism, loving-kindness means wishing someone well. You can start with yourself on a day when you're frustrated or tired.

Pick a wish that fits

"May I get the help I need."

"May I be safe."

"May I be kind to myself while I learn."

Try a small action that matches

If your wish is to get help, ask someone to sit with you. If you're learning something difficult, take a short break or ask someone to show you one step.

My kind wish and one thing I can do…

CHILDREN

A Quiet Practice at Bedtime

If your mind keeps going after the lights are out, tell a safe grown-up what's on your mind. Ask for a little company or for help making a plan for tomorrow.

Notice the room

Feel where the bed supports you. Listen for one sound. If you want to, let a breath come and go on its own. You can leave your eyes open and look at something familiar.

Ask for help after a bad dream

"I had a bad dream. Can you help me remember where I am?" A grown-up can turn on a light or sit with you while you get settled.

Something that helps me feel more comfortable at bedtime…

CHILDREN

When a Friend Tells Me Something Scary

A friend might tell you that someone is hurting them or that they feel like hurting themselves. You can listen and get a safe grown-up right away.

Say a few kind words

“I’m glad you told me. Let’s find someone who can help.” If your friend asks you to keep it secret, you can say, “I care about you. We need a grown-up to help keep you safe.”

Tell a grown-up what you heard

Find a teacher, school counselor, or another safe grown-up. You can ask them to come with you. If one grown-up doesn’t help, tell another. If there is danger right now, use page 2.

Which grown-up would I go to first?

CHILDREN

My Pocket Plan for Big Feelings

Fill this out on a day when you have time. Ask a grown-up to help you keep a copy somewhere you can find it.

My body clue…

One safe thing I can do with my hands or feet…

One sentence I can say when I need help…

My safe grown-up and where to find them…

If I feel unsafe, I tell a safe grown-up right away. If the first one doesn’t help, I tell another.

CHILDREN

A Story About a Storm

When thunder shook the windows, Eli hid under the kitchen table. His aunt sat nearby. “I’m here,” she said. “Would you like me to sit closer or stay where I am?”

“Closer,” said Eli. His aunt moved beside him. They looked for the blue mug on the counter. Eli found a second blue thing, the stripe on her sock.

The storm was still loud. Eli pointed at the hallway. “Can we go where it’s quieter?” His aunt checked that the hallway was safe, and they went together.

Think about the story

What did Eli ask for? What did his aunt do to help? Can you think of another thing Eli could point to or say if the words felt hard to find?

Draw the place you’d go with your safe grown-up.

Practice With a Grown Up

Take turns asking for help

One person says, “I’m having a big feeling. Can you help?” The other says, “I’m listening. Would you like me to sit close or give you room?” Then trade parts.

Try a quiet signal

Pick a signal you can use if words are hard. You might point to the cover of this book, hold up a card, or tap your grown-up’s arm. Practice how they’ll answer.

Remember what to do if you’re unsafe

Point to page 2 and practice finding a second grown-up if the first person is unavailable or doesn’t help.

Our signal and what we’ll do when we see it…

For Grown Ups Helping Children

Start with physical safety and your own tone of voice. Get to a safe place if needed. Speak slowly and offer one or two choices the child can use. “Do you want me here or beside you?” Give them time to answer. Let them point, draw, or sit quietly.

Listen and follow through

If a child tells you someone hurt them, thank them for telling you, protect their immediate safety, and contact appropriate emergency or child protection services. Avoid promising secrecy. If they say they may hurt themselves or someone else, take it seriously and get help promptly. For immediate danger or serious injury, call 911 in the U.S.

Check in again later

If distress persists or interferes with sleep, school, play, or daily care, ask their pediatrician or a qualified mental health professional for help. Let the child know what will happen next in language they can understand.

Keep Your Kit Close

Pick two pages you like. Show them to a safe grown-up. Together, choose a place to keep your pocket plan so you can find it when you need it.

A page I want to read again…

Where we'll keep my pocket plan…

A day we can practice together…

When something feels unsafe, turn to page 2 for help.

Sources and Further Help

U.S. emergency and crisis guidance

SAMHSA · 988 Frequently Asked Questions

https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988/faqs

National Institute of Mental Health · 5 Action Steps to Help Someone Having Thoughts of Suicide

https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/5-action-steps-to-help-someone-having-thoughts-of-suicide

Support after frightening experiences

National Child Traumatic Stress Network and National Center for PTSD · Psychological First Aid Field Operations Guide

https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-pfa-field-operations-guide-2nd-edition

Using the book with support

Grown-ups can bring the pocket plan on page 22 to a pediatrician or a qualified mental health professional for help adapting it. For urgent help, turn to page 2.