

Warning signs vs early warning signs

The term 'early warning signs' has been changed to 'warning signs' as it is a more acceptable term for young people to use in their everyday language. Young people should be encouraged to use language that helps them describe their warning signs such as 'Something happened that made me scared' or 'I'm worried because ...' or 'I've got something important to tell you' or 'I need help'.

It is important to teach the concepts of one step removed technique (**NNA 3**) and protective interrupting (**NNA 4**) prior to beginning the topics.

Topic 2: Warning signs and emergencies

Educators should assess the students' levels of English and understanding before beginning this topic.

If students have not covered the concept of warning signs before, refer to Focus Area 1: The right to be safe in Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum Primary Years: Years 3–5 for more explicit activities.

2.1 Warning signs in unsafe situations

There are physical indicators, external signs and emotional indicators that help young people recognise a situation where they may be at risk of harm. These signs are called warning signs. Introduce the one step removed concept (**NNA 3**) before discussing unsafe situations. The chart below provides some warning sign examples.

External signs (Clues indicated by time, location and people nearby)	Physical indicators (Body messages)	Emotional indicators (Feelings)
• deserted parks	• butterflies in stomach	• scared
• unsupervised toilets	• feeling hot or cold	• worried
• time of day	• being frozen to the spot	• confused
	• heart beating fast	

Display the grid below and provide an example of an unsafe situation for students. For students with low levels of English understanding, use a feelings chart with pictures.

Situation	Warning signs			Strategies
	Physical indicators	External signs	Emotion indicators	
Being home alone and hearing a noise	shaking goose bumps heart beats faster	noise dark being alone	nervous scared feeling vulnerable	Call someone turn on lights go next door

Students add to the grid using their own examples. Be aware of one step removed technique (**NNA 3**).

Discuss warning signs, using the following focus questions:

- How might someone's body react when he/she is in an obviously unsafe situation? (Responses may include: thumping heart, sweaty hands, butterflies in the stomach, paralysed.)
- What uncomfortable feelings are associated with being in an obviously unsafe situation? (Responses may include: feeling panic, being frightened or terrified, becoming angry, feeling vulnerable, being scared.)

- Why might someone not experience warning signs? (Responses could include: the person may trust the other people involved, may have a false sense of safety, may not recognise the other person's behaviour as abusive, may have been 'groomed' or conditioned into thinking certain behaviour is normal.)

Other suggested activity

Cyberbullying warning signs

Use the following information to initiate discussion with students on the warning signs of cyberbullying in the webpage [Bullying online](#).

See the General introduction of the KS:CPC year level documents for information on cyberbullying and e-crime.

2.2 What if someone does not have warning signs?

Students work in pairs to complete [Appendix 8: Warning signs activity](#).

After the activity, use the following focus questions:

- Why might someone not experience warning signs, including clues that highlight warning signs? (Responses could include: the person may trust the other people involved, may have a false sense of safety, may not recognise the other person's behaviour as abusive, or may have been 'groomed' or conditioned into thinking certain behaviour is normal.)
- If a person doesn't have physical warning signs, how else can the person tell if he/she is unsafe? (Responses could include: the person can look for external warning signs, for example, being alone late at night on the street with a group of people approaching; the person can determine if the behaviour is appropriate or inappropriate by asking questions such as 'Is it unsafe?', 'Is it illegal?', 'Are someone's rights not being respected?', 'Is someone alone?', 'Is someone able to get help?')
- Why might some young people choose to ignore their warning signs? (Responses could include: young people are often keen to try new experiences even if they appear to be risky; it may be seen as a part of growing up; pressure from peers.)
- What are the possible physiological reactions to fear or worry? (Discuss the 'fight or flight' response, adrenalin, depression and serotonin.)
- How can a person tell if others are feeling unsafe? (Responses could include: by their body language; comments they make.)

2.2 | Examine this aspect of the topic according to the level of understanding of the students.

2.2 | Risk can also produce excitement and anticipation which may be experienced as pleasurable. Some people may not be able to identify the feelings they are experiencing or they may not recognise their feelings as warning signs of an unsafe situation.

Young people may experience varying degrees of feelings in response to situations. People react differently to different situations. Be aware of students commenting negatively about other students' fears (see Group operating norms **NNA 2**).

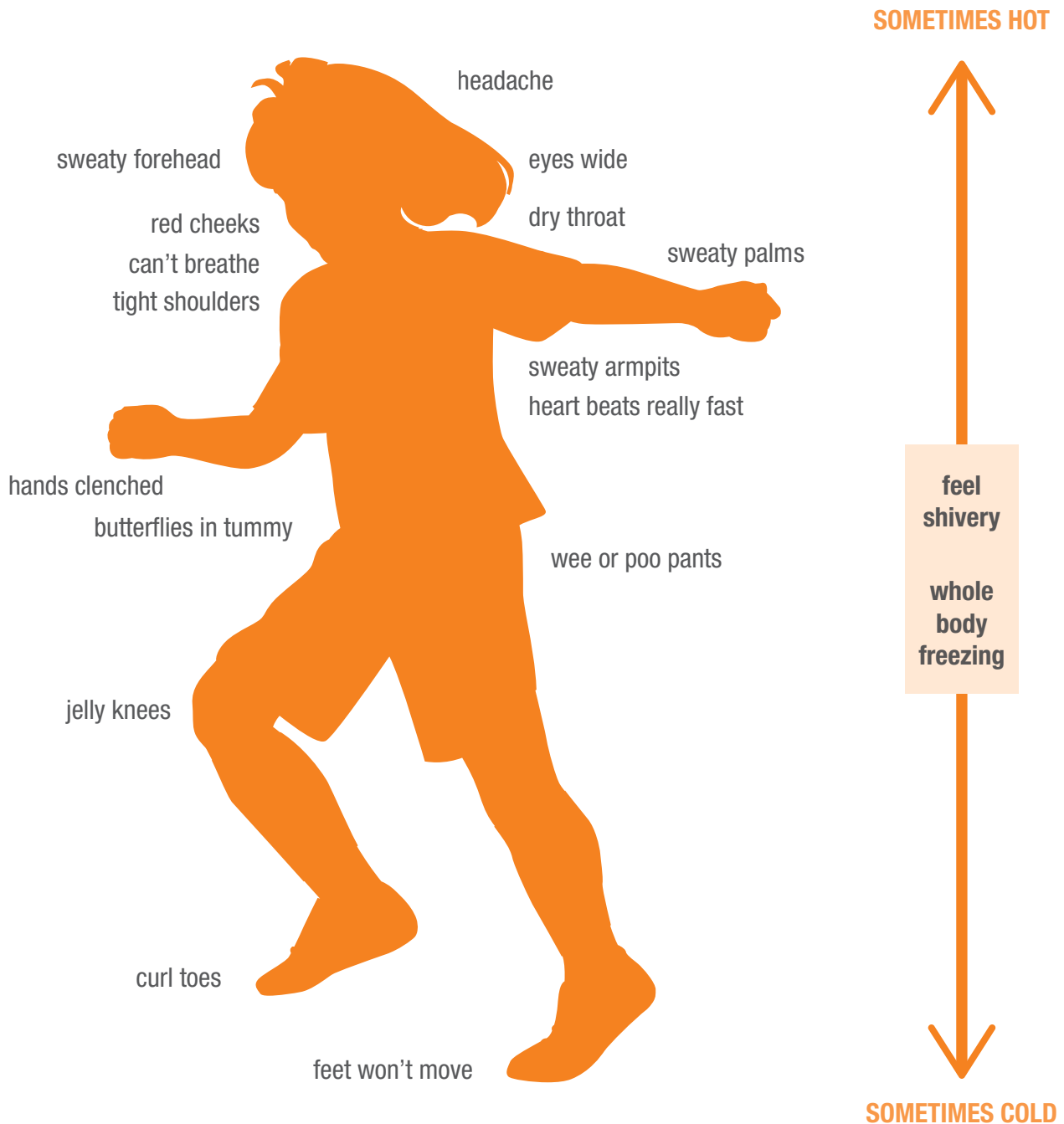
Some students may not experience warning signs at all in unsafe situations; for example, students who have been in domestic violence or other abusive situations, experienced many medical procedures, come as refugees, or have a sensory disability.

Risk-taking may not be the norm of some cultural groups and may be a cause of conflict between parents/caregivers and their children as they develop the risk-taking behaviour of some of their peers.

Note that the concept of grooming has not yet been introduced—see an explanation in this [factsheet on grooming](#) and the Bully Stoppers information sheet on [online grooming](#).

Appendix 3 | Warning signs

This appendix is for educator reference only. Children should develop personal examples of their own warning signs. Some children may not have warning signs.



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