

Introduction

This lesson forms part of the WOW Waterside Safety resource. The activities, designed for 7-11 year olds, teach children the importance of **SAFE: Stay Away From the Edge**.

Schemes of Work Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship.

Learning Objectives

To make children aware of the hidden dangers near inland waterways. This objective applies equally to canals, rivers, lakes and reservoirs.

The Curriculum

England - PSHE & Citizenship.

Scotland - Health Education: Social Health strand.

Wales - Personal and Social Education Framework: Physical Aspect.

Resources

Coloured pens / pencils, plain paper (A4).

Optional: 2 buckets, one with luke warm water and the other with ice cold water.

Key Vocabulary

Hidden dangers, obstacles, duckweed, untreated, hazard, bollard.

Teaching Activities

Introduction Blindfold one of the group. Get them to try and walk across a familiar room/space. Choose one person to call out directions if the blindfolded child heads towards any dangers. Once the child has crossed the space ask them how easy it was. Message: This is a familiar place but there were still hidden dangers.

Next, blindfold another child and before they cross the space move some of the furniture to create obstacles. Choose one person to call out directions if the blindfolded child heads towards any dangers. Once the child has crossed the space ask them how easy it was. Message: This time there were many hidden dangers.

Finally, blindfold a third child and as before move some of the furniture to create obstacles. Explain that this time the rules will change, there will be three 'hotspots' in the room. These hotspots are areas which look completely safe but if the blindfolded child should stand on one then they will be in danger. Choose a child to call out instructions and send them out of the room. Show the rest of the children where the hotspots will be and tell them that if the blindfolded child steps on the hotspots you want them to shout out. Allow the child who's calling out the instructions to come back in to the room and begin the game.

Message: Sometimes dangers are so well hidden that it's impossible to spot them in advance.

Group Activity Explain that near waterways there are lots of hidden dangers. One of these is the COLD...

To demonstrate the effect of cold water, you could provide two containers of water, one luke warm, the other ice cold. Children tie a simple bow in a piece of string, plunge their hands in the warm water, followed by the ice cold water. Then they should try to tie the same knot in the string with cold hands. This effectively demonstrates the effect of cold on your hands. Imagine how it would affect the rest of your body!

Continued...

Teaching Activities

There are many hidden dangers near water, can the children name any?
During a discussion on hidden dangers, the following points should be discussed...

- **Vegetation hiding the water's surface**

Plants, cut grass and especially duckweed can make the surface of the water appear like solid earth.

- **Hidden objects under the water**

Broken glass, metal and sharp rocks can be dangerous beneath the surface.

- **Water**

Cold – water can be extremely cold and can cause the body to shut down very quickly and without warning.

Untreated – canal and river water is not treated and so may contain disease-causing bacteria. This can cause illness and infect any broken skin.

- **Ice**

Ice may look strong enough to hold your weight, but you can never tell how thick or strong it is. Even thick ice can be weakened by trapped objects.

- **Hidden bank edge**

Plants can hide the edge of the bank and even where you can see the edge; getting too close could make you slip into the water.

- **Currents**

All waterways, even canals, can have strong, hidden currents that can drag you under.

In addition, the following points could be relevant to your area...

- **Low bridges or overhanging trees** – can knock cyclists off their bikes.

- **Narrow or uneven towpaths or riverbanks** - can, again, be a hazard to cyclists.

- **Canal users can produce hazards** – fishing poles, mooring spikes/ropes, bollards, cyclists etc.

- **Slippery banks** – these are often grassy or muddy.

- **Deep water** – it can be quite difficult to tell how deep water is – especially in rivers.

- **Strangers** – adults you don't know should be treated in the same way, wherever they are – your usual 'Stranger Danger' message applies.

- **Litter** - on the bank or towpath could contain syringes etc. and so should be avoided.

Individual Activity Tell the children that you are concerned that children in a younger class / younger group (eg Scouts, Cubs) are not aware of the hidden dangers at the waterside. Get the children to design a poster to explain the hidden dangers to a younger audience.

An effective approach could be to tackle this poster from the point of view of "You may have been told that..." (e.g. Swimming in the canal is OK). This can go some way towards countering the influence of peers or even parents who might encourage unsafe behaviour through example.

Remind children that the poster **must**

have the **SAFE** message written prominently.

identify some of the hidden dangers !

These posters can be displayed in the targeted classroom, youth centre etc. Put them low down so they are at eye level for your target audience. If you wish, children may devise a presentation aimed at making younger children aware of the hidden dangers at the waterside. Give them the opportunity to make the presentation to the younger children.

Plenary Give the children time to show their posters and explain their messages.