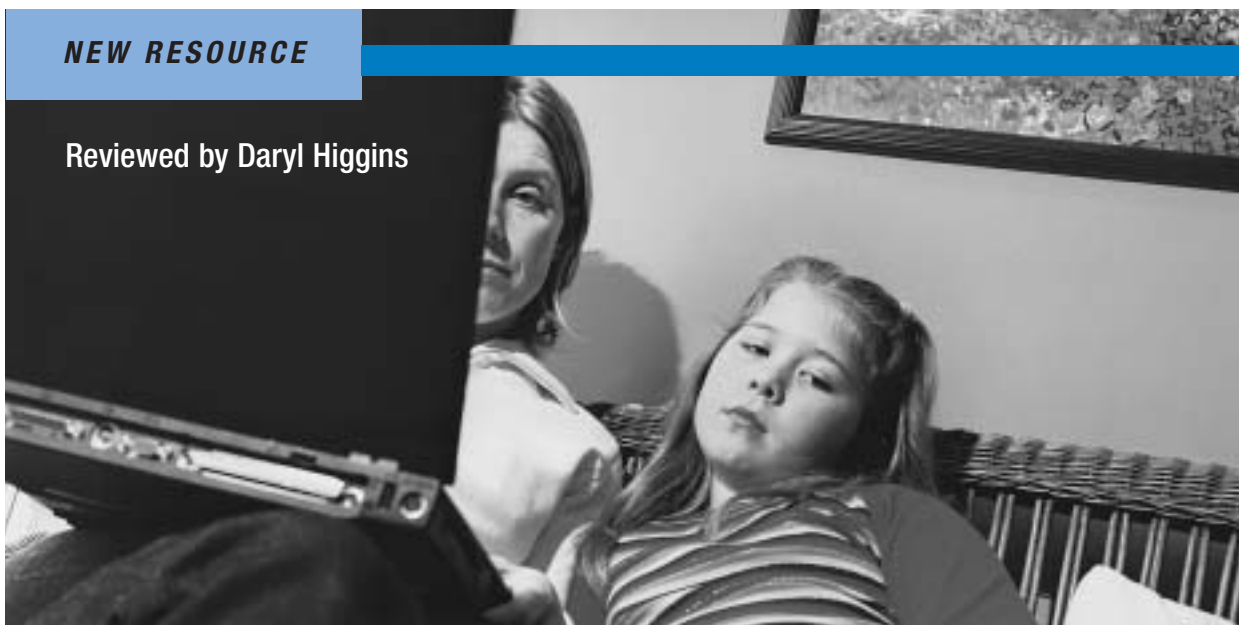


Reviewed by Daryl Higgins



Resource for keeping children safe “Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure”

Bravehearts is a charity focused on prevention, intervention and victim advocacy in relation to the sexual assault of children. Supported by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services and the Telstra Foundation, Bravehearts has produced a CD-ROM that can be used by parents to assist them in talking with their children about keeping safe, and what they can do if they feel unsafe, or “yucky”. Using an animated character (Ditto – a lion cub), children are guided through a series of fun, interactive activities on line, where they are exposed to educational messages, such as:

- we all have the right to feel safe with people;
- private means special, keep out they belong to me;
- when we don’t feel right about something or someone, we are allowed to say “no” and then tell someone else about it;
- nothing is too “yucky” that it has to be a secret - you can always tell someone about it; and
- it’s OK to say “no” if you’re feeling unsafe or unsure.

The beauty of the CD is that as well as being interactive, it encourages further discussion between parents and children at various stages during the program. These opportunities are supported by the accompanying “Parents Guide” which explains in more detail some of the concepts, and what needs to be reinforced. For example, when talking about the fact that “It’s OK to say NO”, the Guide states: “Ensure your child understands that “anyone” includes you, your partner, your family, – “anyone” means “everyone” (p. 9).

The animations, and the “pitch” of the messages are ideal for children under 10. Technical or complicated

terms are not used. In fact, the word “sex” is never used, and it is left up to parents to explain the names of the “private parts”. Older children may find some of the activities less engaging. Unfortunately, some use of double negatives in the questions asked of children may be confusing for some. However, this highlights the importance of this tool not being intended as a “stand-alone”, but as an adjunct to discussion between children and parents about body parts, yucky feelings, and how to keep safe. Parents need to sit down with their child as they work through the activities.

The focus of many of the messages are more relevant to the prevention of sexual abuse than other maltreatment types, although the Parent Guide does inform parents about other types of abuse. The CD-ROM ends with an activity where children are shown how to build their own safety plan – identifying trusted adults in their world to whom they could turn if they had something difficult to discuss.

Teaching safety rules is one important step within a broad approach to child abuse prevention, and this CD-ROM will certainly be a useful tool for many parents in facilitating discussion with their children.

Reference

Bravehearts Inc. (2003), “Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure”, [CD-ROM and Parents Guide].

For further information, go to: www.bravehearts.org.au

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