

It's OK to Say 'No'

SPHE STRANDS:

Myself – Developing self-confidence – Making decisions – Personal safety

Myself and Others – Relating to others

Story

Read the following story:

John was in sixth class. He had two really good friends – Henry and Mark. They went to football together on Monday evenings and played together in the school yard. Recently, their parents allowed them to meet up in the shopping centre in town on a Saturday afternoon.

Usually they walked around for a while and then went into the gadget shop. They all loved looking at the technology on sale there. Sometimes they'd go into Eddie Rockets for a burger and chips before going home. John's mam had told him she didn't mind what shops he went into but he was not allowed out of the shopping centre.

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Last Saturday they went to the gadget shop as usual. When they were in there, they met Mark's big brother and his friends. They said to Mark 'Are you coming outside?' and they left the shop. Mark said to Henry and John, 'Come on outside for a few minutes. My brother and his friends are hanging out there.' Henry said, 'Yeah, grand.' For a moment John panicked. He didn't want to look silly by saying he wasn't allowed. So he just nodded and followed them.

Outside, the older lads were smoking at the fire exit. 'Do you want a drag, lads?' one of them asked Mark and he took a puff. He handed it to Henry and then on to John. John really didn't want to do it, but he was too embarrassed to say no. Next thing he saw car lights flashing and he realised his mother had just arrived to pick him up. How was he going to explain this?

When you have read the story ask questions such as:

- Where did John go with friends? What's that like?
- Why do you think John's mam said he wasn't to go outside the shopping centre? Do you think that was a reasonable rule?
- Did John want to go outside?
- Why didn't he say no? Have you ever been in an awkward situation like that?
- Why did he not say no when he was offered a cigarette?
- Can you think of any other situations when it might be difficult to say no?

It's OK to Say No – Role-play

Divide the class into groups of five or six and invite them to role-play situations where young people might feel pressure from their friends to do something they don't want to do. In their role-

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play one child should stand up to the others and confidently, but not aggressively, say 'No' or 'I don't want to do that' or words to that effect.

- Offer examples if they can't think of any: pressure to smoke, drink, ask a boy/girl out, kiss someone, gamble, shop-lift, etc.
- After each role-play have a class discussion about the children's feelings and reactions to what they have seen.

Reflection

Invite the children to close their eyes and sit still with their feet on the floor. Then read the following:

As we get older we are given more responsibility. You might find that your parents allow you to go places and do things that they wouldn't let you do before. Sometimes you might find yourself in tricky situations and you will have decisions to make. It might feel like it's easier to go along with whatever the crowd is doing but you can say no if you're not comfortable. It's important to do what you know to be right.

When we are with a group of friends we need to respect that everyone has to make up their own mind. We shouldn't pressure others to do something they don't want to do. If someone says no, that's OK. We should accept what they have decided and not make fun of them or try to make them change their minds.

We ask God's help as we grow up to make good decisions for ourselves, to have the courage to speak out when necessary and to respect other people's decisions, even when we don't agree with them. Amen.