

Red and Green Flags

★ See a full description of how to conduct this topic in the Seeking Safety manual.

Youth Topic Description

Notice how your behavior changes when you are on a path to safety (green flags) versus a path to danger (red flags).




Activity Options pgs. 98-99

- 1 - **Flags Basketball Game**
Play some hoops while identifying red and green flags
- 2 - **Red and Green Bunting***
Create a visual representation of safety and danger signs
- 3 - **Comic Strip: From Danger to Safety** (plus worksheet on pg. 100)
Become a cartoonist and develop a safety plan
- 4 - **All Flags Are Not Equal***
Rate flags in level of concern
- 5 - **Hot Water Analogy**
Learn to notice mild danger signs

**activity requires preparation*



Additional Handouts for Youth

- **Quotation Coloring Sheet** pg. 101
Link today's quotation to the session. For example, "Your past and present behavior is a roadmap of safety and danger. Today we will talk about how to stay away from pitfalls."
- **Key Points** pg. 102 
- **Create a Safety Plan - Adolescent Example** pg. 103

Acknowledgements

- ♥ The *HORSE Basketball Game* was shared by a Los Angeles, CA training participant.
- ♥ The *Red and Green Bunting* activity was shared by Hadwat Sankari, LCSW.
- ♥ The *From Danger to Safety Comic Strip* graphic was created by Laura Martinez and used with permission.

Activity Options – Red and Green Flags

Option 1 – Flags Basketball Game

Preparation Level: Minimal



Supplies:

- Ball and garbage can or basketball hoop
- *Seeking Safety* topic Handout 1, “Notice What You Say to Yourself”



Instructions: Play the basketball game “horse” with a garbage can, indoor back-of-the-door basketball hoop or on a basketball court (see www.wikihow.com/Play-Horse-the-Basketball-Game). Rather than using the word “horse,” use “flags.” The first person tries to make a basket. If the person makes it, the next person tries to make the same shot from the same location (if unsuccessful, the first letter “F” is earned). If the *first* person *doesn’t* make the shot, the next person can choose to take a shot from any location. Once someone gains all of the letters (F-L-A-G-S), that person is eliminated from the game. With each attempt, youth must state a personal green flag (if shot is made) or a red flag (if shot is missed). Allow youth to look at *Seeking Safety* topic Handout 1 and share other common adolescent examples such as, being secretive, bullying others, getting into power struggles with adults, watching dark media content, skipping or failing classes, etc.

Option 2 – Red and Green Bunting

Preparation Level: Moderate



Supplies:

- Red and green paper
- Scissors
- String
- Tape or glue

Instructions: Cut out red and green paper triangles (or use an online bunting template such as www.wikihow.com/Make-Bunting). Invite youth to write personal red and green flags on the corresponding-colored flags. Then attach the flags to a string to make a bunting.

Option 3 – Comic Strip: From Danger to Safety

Preparation Level: None



Supplies:

- *Toolkit* Worksheet, “From Danger to Safety Comic Strip” on pg. 100

Instructions: Ask youth to draw themselves in a progression from *mild* to *moderate* to *serious* danger in the first comic strip on the *Toolkit* Worksheet. Then draw steps towards safety on the second comic strip. Use the sentence starters to generate discussion. For virtual treatment, use blank paper rather than the template provided.

Option 4 – All Flags Are Not Equal

Preparation Level: Moderate



Supplies:

- *Seeking Safety* topic Handout 1, “Notice What You Say to Yourself”
- Scissors

Instructions: Cut out the red flags from *Seeking Safety* topic Handout 1. Randomly select a few to give youth with instructions to order them from *most* to *least concerning*. For virtual treatment, read the red flags out loud for the youth to order.

Option 5 – Hot Water Analogy

Preparation Level: Minimal



Supplies:

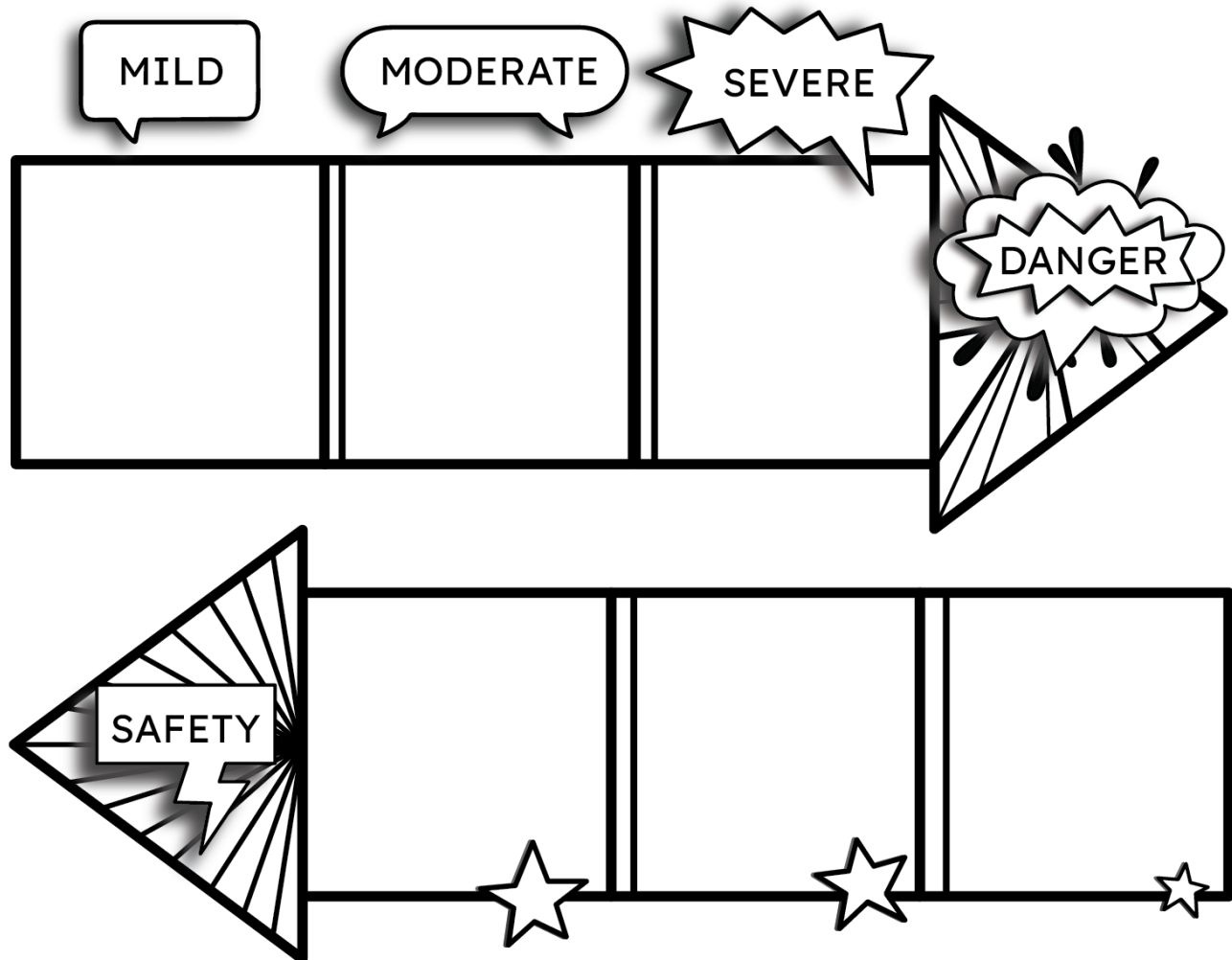
- *Seeking Safety* topic Handout 1, “Notice What You Say to Yourself”
- *Seeking Safety* topic Handout 2, “Create a Safety Plan”
- Optional: YouTube video, “Jump or Adjust- The Boiling Frog Theory”

Instructions: Use an analogy of three pots of water. Explain that the first one was briefly on the stove at a low temperature; the second one was on the stove for a little longer at medium heat; the third pot was left on high long enough to boil. Then ask, “Which one will cool the fastest?” Highlight why it’s beneficial to notice mild danger signs before they become crises. Then invite youth to fill out *Seeking Safety* topic Handout 2. Explain that the first pot is *mild danger*, the second pot is *moderate danger* and the third pot is *serious danger*. Describe the *safety plan* column as three different amounts of ice needed to cool the water depending on the heat. Encourage youth to look at examples of red and green flags in *Seeking Safety* topic Handout 1 (and brainstorm other common adolescent red and green flags—see examples listed in *Activity Option 1* instructions). Optional: Play the YouTube 2 minute video, “Jump or Adjust- The Boiling Frog Theory.”



From Danger to Safety Comic Strip

- ★ In the first comic strip, draw yourself as a cartoon going from mild to moderate to serious danger. In the second comic strip, draw what you can do to move toward becoming more and more safe.



★ **Discussion Sentence Starters:**

- *Early red flags* when I start in a downward direction are...
- *Moderate danger signs* when things get worse are...
- *Serious red flags* when I spiral in a downward direction are...
- *Green flags* that show I am doing well are...
- I will stay safe when I notice red flags by...
- To keep positive momentum, I will...
- A good person to alert me to behavior changes is...



Quotation Coloring Sheet

**“It’s called wayfinding...it’s seeing
where you’re going in your mind.
Knowing where you are by
knowing where you’ve been.”**

— Demigod Maui in the movie *Moana*



Key Points - Red and Green Flags

- Your behavior can tell you a lot! Detect warning signs before you're in too deep (e.g., mood swings, time with unsafe people, poor grades). These are called *red flags*.
- Change gears before there is a crisis and move towards safety (e.g., ask for help, prioritize healing, take good care of your body, do the right thing). Your safe behaviors are called *green flags*.
- Don't rely on emotions as your only gauge of how you're doing. You can feel terrible, while doing all the right things (e.g., attending counseling, leaving an abusive relationship, saying "no" to substances). You can feel great, while doing all the wrong things (e.g., getting high, skipping class, having unsafe sex).
- Substance abuse and unsafe behaviors often build, like a snowball rolling in a snowy field. It's easier to manage when it's small versus big. Interrupt patterns before they get out of control.
- Doing what feels good in the moment can prevent you from living your best life. Evaluate your behavior to see if you are heading in the direction you want.





Create a Safety Plan - Adolescent Example

★ *This is Red and Green Flags topic Handout 2 from the Seeking Safety manual, adapted with permission to use an adolescent example.*

Red Flags	Green Flags
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Mild</u> Danger (Starting to show distress)</p> <p>I think I'm fat and look at pictures of when I was thinner.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">What I Will Do to Stay Safe</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remind myself that the thought "I'm fat" is a warning sign for my eating disorder. 2. Stop looking at pictures that make me feel bad. 3. Repeat what my counselor says: "It's normal for bodies to change."
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Moderate</u> Danger (Getting serious—watch out)</p> <p>I weigh myself and pick apart my body in the mirror a lot.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">What I Will Do to Stay Safe</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Put the scale away and stop spending so much time in front of the mirror. 2. Eat healthy meals and try to focus on my health rather than looking perfect. 3. Let my counselor and parents know that I'm struggling.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Serious</u> Danger (Emergency!!)</p> <p>I skip meals and exercise too much.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">What I Will Do to Stay Safe</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell my school counselor and parents that it's serious. 2. Go back to my eating disorder group. 3. See my counselor more often.