

Stay Safe by Respecting Animals

OBJECTIVE

To understand how to be safe around animals and to respect their feelings.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Students will learn that animals can react in different ways, depending on how we treat them. They'll also learn the proper steps for meeting a dog for the first time and how to act appropriately around animals.

MATERIALS

- 🐾 Dog puppet or stuffed animal

ACTIVITY

Preliminary Discussion

- 🐾 Do animals have some of the same feelings that people do? Give examples. Have you ever seen a dog or cat happy, sad, scared or excited? Give examples. Think of some times when you felt these feelings also.
- 🐾 What if you see a dog or cat in your neighborhood without a person - is it okay to pet it? Discuss that you should never go near an animal that's running loose. What could happen? The animal could be lost or homeless, and may bite because it's scared or hurt. Is there a way to help this animal without going near it? Yes! Ask an adult to try to help this animal: your teacher, parent, neighbor, etc. Discuss that animal shelters like the Dumb Friends League can help animals that are lost or homeless.
- 🐾 What if you see a stranger walking a dog - is it okay to pet it? If this person is a stranger, then it's not safe to approach them.
- 🐾 What if you see a person that you know walking a dog - is it okay to pet it? If you know the person, then it's okay to approach them. Following are the steps to take:
 1. First ask the person if you can pet the dog. Not every dog is friendly or feels comfortable around children or strangers. What if the person says you shouldn't pet the dog? Then you should respect that and walk away.
 2. If the person says that you can pet the dog, then you should "introduce" yourself to the dog. Hang the top of your hand down by your side for the dog to sniff. This is called "the droopy hand." The top of your hand smells like you - the palm of your hand smells like what you've been touching (for example, if you ate an orange, it would smell like the orange).
 3. Once the dog has sniffed your hand, then you can pet it. You should pet the dog in a place where it can see your hand. Ask the students to take their hands and put them on their head. Can they see their hands? If the dog can't see your hands, then it may get scared. So you should gently pet the dog under the chin or on the chest (not the mouth or throat).
- 🐾 Have the students repeat these three steps.
- 🐾 How should you act when you approach a dog? Whenever you're approaching a dog you should be quiet and gentle. Loud voices and fast movements may scare a dog. Pet a dog very gently and speak to it softly.

Procedure

Using the dog puppet or stuffed animal, have each student come up and practice the steps on how to meet a dog.

Post-Discussion

- 🐾 You should always treat pets gently, be quiet and move slowly around them, whether it's a dog, cat, rabbit, gerbil or bird. How would you feel if someone came up to you and started yelling

and pulling your hair? It would probably scare you and make you mad. Animals have these same feelings.

- 🐾 How can we be safe around our own pets? Can our own pets get scared or mad at things we do? Yes, we need to make sure that we treat our own pets with respect also. When our pets are eating or playing with their toys, we shouldn't try to take their food or toys from them. Pets don't know how to share like we do. When our pets are sleeping, we shouldn't make a lot of noise and wake them. They could get scared and growl or even bite. If your pet is sick or hurt you shouldn't touch it because it may think you're causing the pain and bite you. Tell your parents if you think your pet is sick or hurt.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Invite an educator from the Dumb Friends League to do an expanded animal safety program with your class. Call the Humane Education Program at 303.696.4941 Ext. 398 for more information and to schedule a program.