











According to survey data published in the journal *Pediatrics*, nearly half of families reported their children with autism wandered or eloped from safe environments. And more than a third of the children who wandered were unable to communicate their name and/or address. Finding and safely recovering a missing child with autism presents unique and difficult challenges for families, law enforcement, first responders and search teams. This running away or wandering behavior puts these children at risk of accidental drowning, traffic injury and other dangers. As police, fire and EMS personnel are often the first to respond in these situations, it is important that autistic children are comfortable with the various types of first responders, and not fearful or overwhelmed by their presence.

The goal of hosting a sensory friendly event is to familiarize children with autism to the sights and sounds associated with different types of law enforcement, fire and rescue units. This includes introducing them to police officers, firefighters and EMS personnel, demonstrating how different equipment looks, functions and sounds, and other things they may see in the case of a wandering incident, like special K-9 teams. Making these resources more familiar may help alleviate some of the fears children may associate with rescuers and rescue situations.

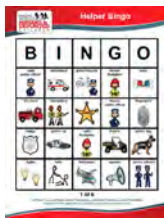
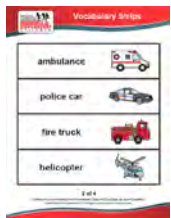
1.  **Find the right partners-** If you have a school for children with autism in your community, approach them to see if they'd like to participate. Check with public schools and other community groups to find programs for children with autism. Approach local law enforcement/fire rescue through crime prevention or community policing units to see if they'd like to be part of the event.
2.  **Assemble a planning committee-** Determine a date, time and agenda for the event. Find out from the school/community group personnel if they want lights and sirens, or if they wish to keep it more low key for the kids. Arrange to have Child IDs provided that include maps of existing hazards, including water. Distribute *NCMEC Autism Wandering Tips* to participating students and families.
3.  **Keep it simple-** Sometimes less is more, especially with a population that can be overwhelmed with too much stimulation. Make sure the assets are positioned in a way it's easy for kids to access and not too much for the experience.
4.  **Publicize the event-** Let local media know, and follow-up, so the event gets good coverage. Make sure the host school/community group has obtained signed permission slips from students' parents or guardians before posting any photographs or videos of students.
5.  **Mobilize social media-** Letting your followers know what's happening is a great way to spread the word. And remember, a picture is worth a thousand words.
6.  **Observe what works-** The kids will let you know their favorite parts. At one event, a custom police microphone might be a big hit, but could over stimulate children at another event. Children with autism actively engage all five of their senses in order to process the scene. Ensure that if they reach out to touch something, it's not too hot, sharp, or toxic if they then taste it.
7.  **Make the event a learning experience for first responders-** Remember, they may not have a lot of experience dealing with children with special needs, so it may be new to many of them. Gather the first responders on the day of the event and ask an administrator from the school/community group to share some of the coping behaviors that may be observed while interacting with the kids.
8.  **Get feedback-** Once the event is over, talk to parents and teachers to find out how the kids reacted. You'll want to gather as much feedback as possible to make the next event an even bigger success!
9.  **Be ready for different responses from the kids-** Having adequate support from teachers and aides help manage the kids and keep the event on track.
10.  **Thank everyone who participated-** It takes cooperation and commitment to pull off an event like this. With the right partners, you can have a great and memorable event for the kids.

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WHAT SYMBOL-SUPPORTED RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO PREPARE FOR THE EVENT?

Vocabulary Strips, Helper Bingo, Sensory Communication Board, Vocabulary Communication Board, Word Definitions, and the First Responders social narrative - Consider providing symbol-supported materials to teachers and event facilitators 30 days before the event for planning, review, completion, and instruction.



WHAT SYMBOL-SUPPORTED RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO USE DURING THE EVENT?

Communication and Sensory Boards - Consider providing communication and sensory symbol-supports throughout the event. Have laminated familiar supports available for attendees to use for reciprocal understanding and learning. Any of the symbol-supported materials teachers and facilitators have used for planning could be helpful, but specifically the Sensory Scales and communication boards may need to be readily available on the day of the event.



WHAT SYMBOL-SUPPORTED RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO PROCESS AND DISCUSS AFTER THE EVENT?

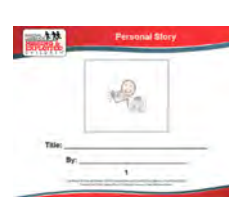
Participant Survey - Encourage all attendees to complete the 2-page Participant Survey with trusted adults and return to a central location or contact person for compiling. Make a plan to share the results of the survey and your observation of what worked with the original planning team for future events.

Paragraph Completion - This symbol-supported Paragraph Completion activity assists attendees with processing and internalizing the lessons taught that day.

The Class Newspaper Activity - This small or large group discussion activity template is designed to help event attendees learn from each other and have dialogue about their experiences. Consider copying, binding, and classroom publishing a completed work that remains a constant in a classroom library or home reading collection.

The Personal Story Activity - This activity helps event attendees define, articulate, and process their personal thoughts and experiences from the day's events. If laminated and bound as a book, this can be a self-published work by an individual student that is kept, re-read, and shared with home care providers.

All Symbol-supported Materials - Disseminate any printed materials or digital PDFs to first responders, parent, caregivers, media, and attendees with the goal of communicating effectively to children with autism during a safety event.



police officers



firefighters



paramedics



police dogs



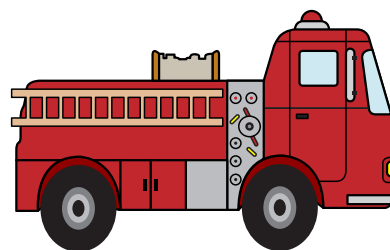
ambulance



police car



fire truck

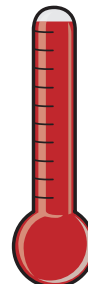


helicopter



2 of 4

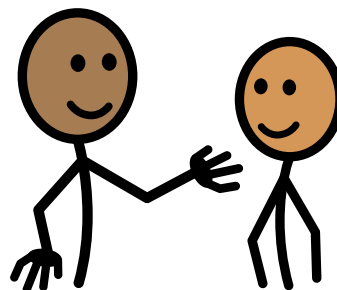
hot



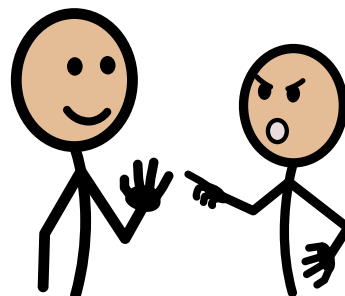
loud



touch

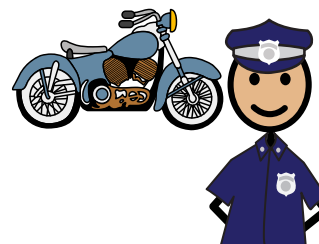


don't touch

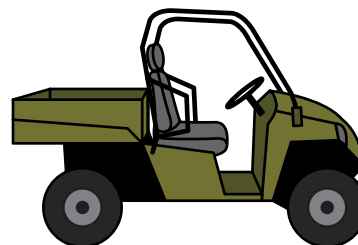


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police motorcycle



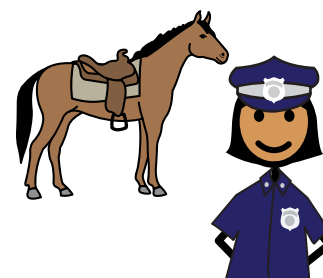
police ATV







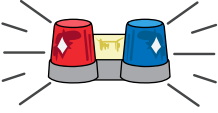
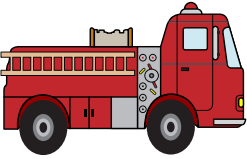









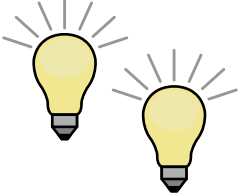
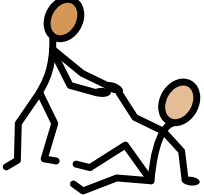



police bicycle



police horse



4 of 4

B	I	N	G	O
male police officer 	ambulance 	police bicycle 	female firefighter 	siren 
fire truck 	firefighters 	 SHERIFF	female police officer 	fingerprint 
badge 	police car 	male firefighter 	police ATV 	police dog 
lights 	help 	helicopter 	speaker 	police officers 

Helper Bingo

B	I	N	G	O
<p>police motorcycle</p> 	<p>uniforms</p> 	<p>911</p> 	<p>male firefighter</p> 	<p>badge</p> 
<p>speaker</p> 	<p>help</p> 	<p>SHERIFF</p> 	<p>police ATV</p> 	<p>helicopter</p> 
<p>police officer bicycle</p> 	<p>fingerprint</p> 	<p>police dog</p> 	<p>fire truck</p> 	<p>siren</p> 
<p>police officers</p> 	<p>ambulance</p> 	<p>female police officer</p> 	<p>lights</p> 	<p>female firefighter</p> 



2 of 6

Helper Bingo

B	I	N	G	O
speaker 	female firefighter 	siren 	uniforms 	help 
ambulance 	911 		police officer motorcycle 	lights 
police dog 	badge 	male police officer 	police car 	fire truck 
police officers 	firefighters 	police ATV 	fingerprint 	female police officer 

3 of 6

Helper Bingo





B	I	N	G	O
911 	police dog 	male police officer 	ambulance 	siren 
speaker 	fingerprint 	uniforms 	help 	
female police officer 	lights 	firefighters 	helicopter 	male firefighter 
police car 	fire truck 	badge 	police officer bicycle 	police ATV 

4 of 6

B	I	N	G	O
fire truck 	fingerprint 	police office motorcycle 	police officers 	female firefighter 
helicopter 	badge 	 SHERIFF	police ATV 	ambulance 
uniforms 	police car 	911 	female police officer 	speaker 
help 	siren 	police dog 	firefighter 	lights 

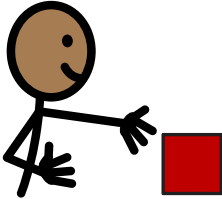
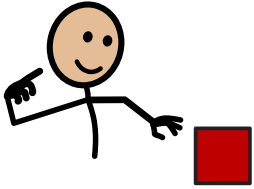
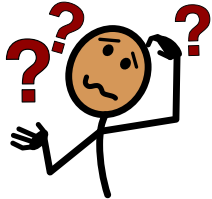




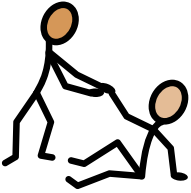



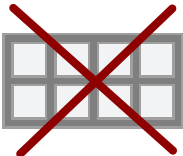

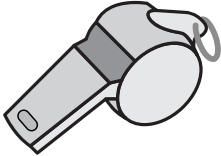

5 of 6

Helper Bingo




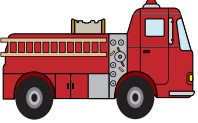

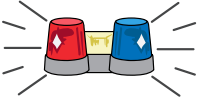
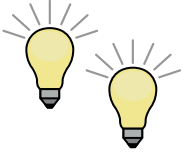













B	I	N	G	O
<p>police officers</p> 	<p>speaker</p> 	<p>helicopter</p> 	<p>help</p> 	<p>lights</p> 
<p>police dog</p> 	<p>police ATV</p> 	<p>SHERIFF</p> 	<p>male firefighter</p> 	<p>police car</p> 
<p>badge</p> 	<p>fingerprint</p> 	<p>female police officer</p> 	<p>firefighters</p> 	<p>fire truck</p> 
<p>siren</p> 	<p>female firefighter</p> 	<p>police bicycle</p> 	<p>ambulance</p> 	<p>male police officer</p> 

6 of 6

Sensory Communication Board

<p>I need</p> 	<p>I want</p> 	<p>I don't know</p> 	<p>noise-cancelling headphones</p> 	<p>baseball hat</p> 
<p>I like</p> 	<p>I do not like</p> 	<p>help</p> 	<p>sunglasses</p> 	<p>short break</p> 
<p>yes</p> 	<p>not on this board</p> 	<p>no</p> 	<p>whistle</p> 	

Vocabulary Communication Board

<p>help</p> 	<p>police officers</p> 	<p>police car</p> 	<p>fire truck</p> 	<p>ambulance</p> 	<p>siren</p> 	<p>lights</p> 
<p>I don't know</p> 	<p>badge</p> 	<p>police dog</p> 	<p>firefighters</p> 	<p>uniforms</p> 	<p>helicopter</p> 	<p>police ATV</p> 
<p>yes</p> 	<p>not on this board</p> 	<p>no</p> 	<p>9-1-1</p> 	<p>speaker</p> 	<p>police bicycle</p> 	<p>police motorcycle</p> 

Directions: Use these definition creation pages to help students construct sentences or definitions about people, equipment, sights and sounds related to emergency situations.

police officers



Police officers _____

police car



Police car _____

police dog



Police dog _____

police station



Police station _____

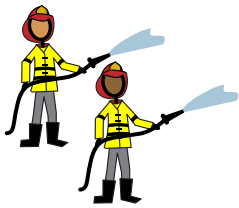
Directions: Use these definition creation pages to help students construct sentences or definitions about people, equipment, sights and sounds related to emergency situations.

firefighter



A firefighter _____

firefighters



Firefighters _____

firefighters



Firefighters _____

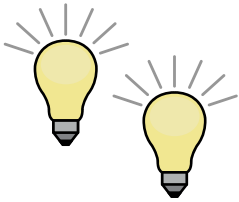
firefighters



Firefighters _____

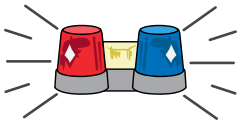
Directions: Use these definition creation pages to help students construct sentences or definitions about people, equipment, sights and sounds related to emergency situations.

lights



Lights _____

sirens



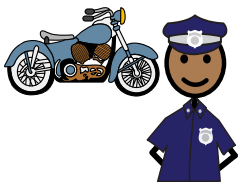
Sirens _____

helicopter



Helicopter _____

police motorcycle



Police motorcycle _____

First Responders Help

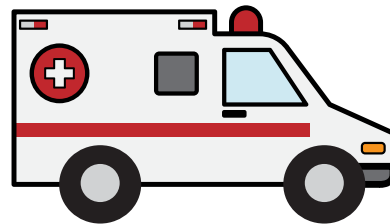
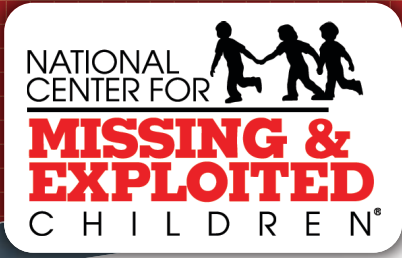


by People Everywhere

1

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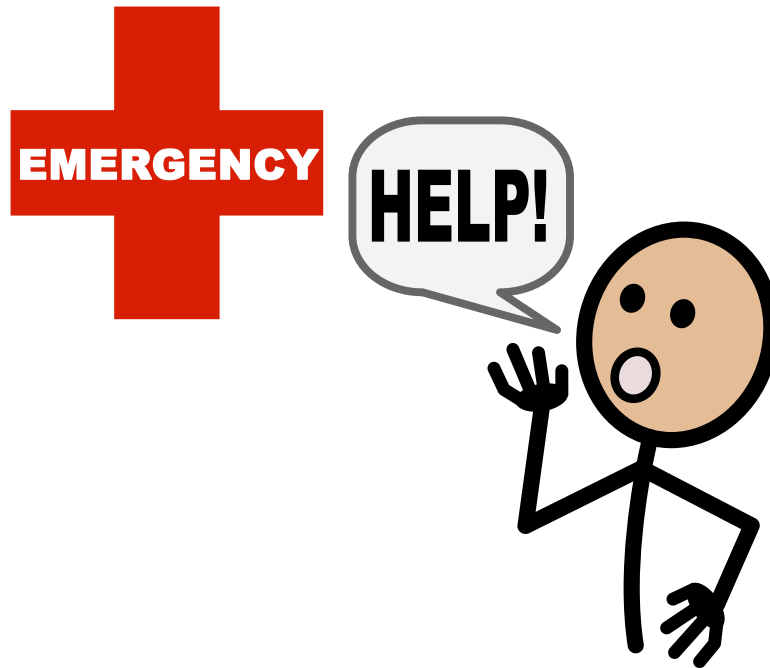
Social Narrative



Sometimes, emergencies happen.

2

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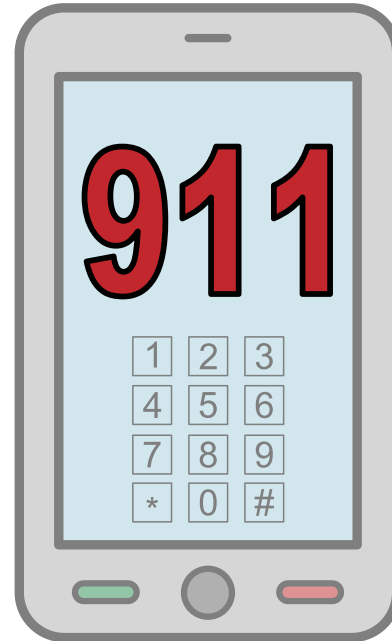
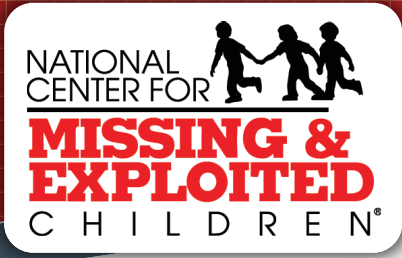


**An emergency means you
need help right now !**

3

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Social Narrative



**When you have an emergency,
you call 9-1-1.**

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Social Narrative

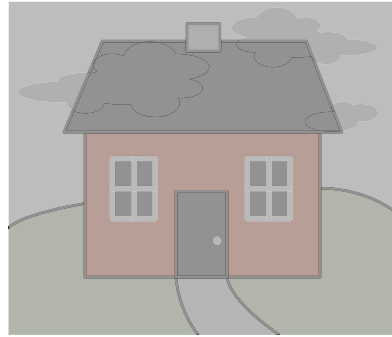
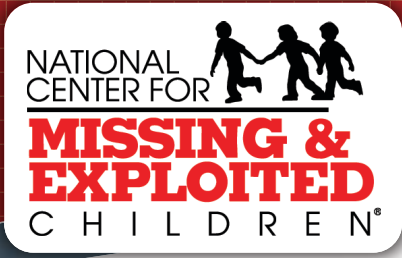


There are weather emergencies,

5

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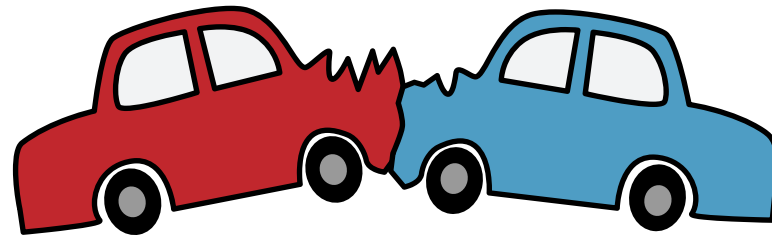
Social Narrative



smoke and fire emergencies.

6

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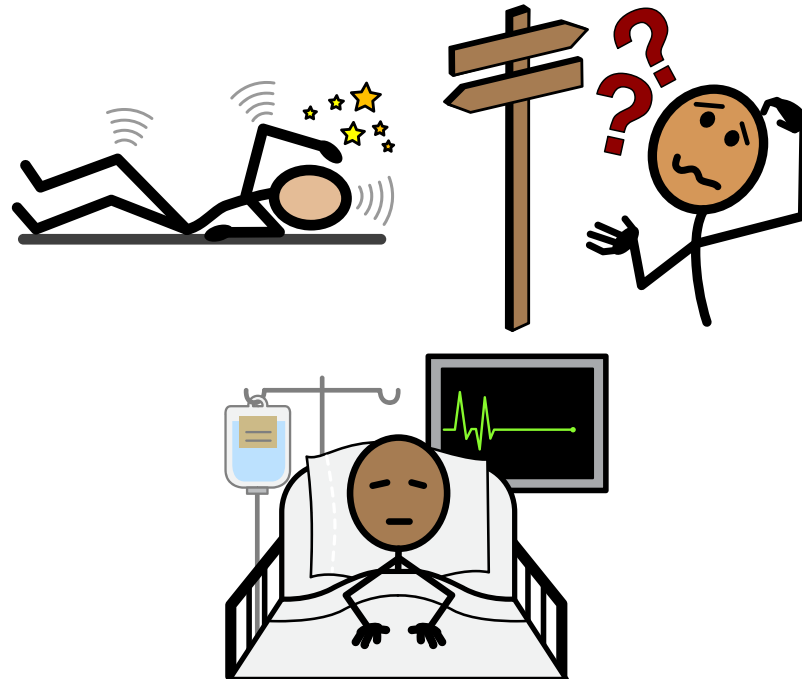
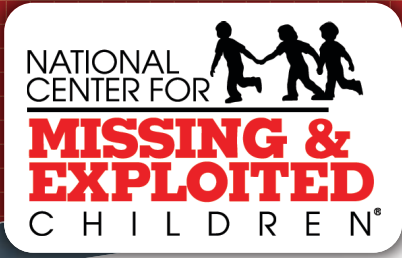


accident emergencies,

7

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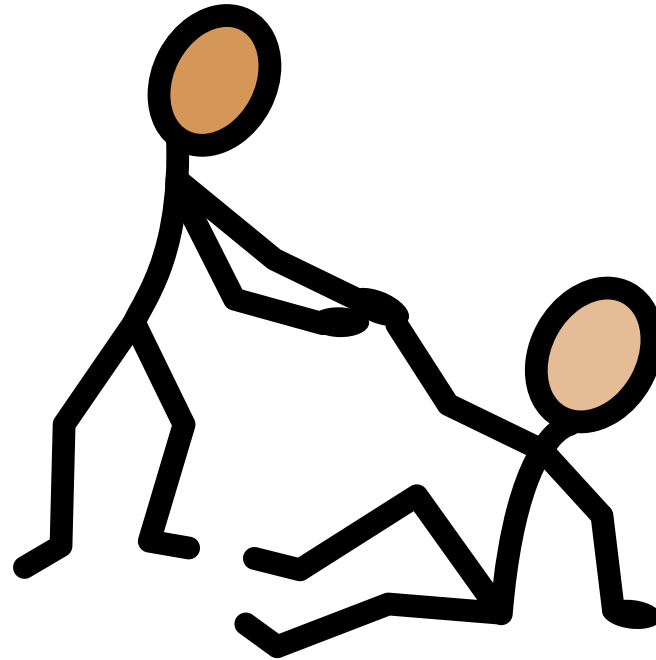
Social Narrative



and people emergencies.

8

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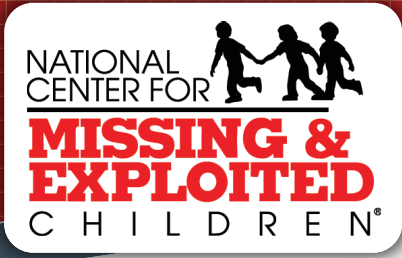


**First responders help
people in emergencies.**

9

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Social Narrative

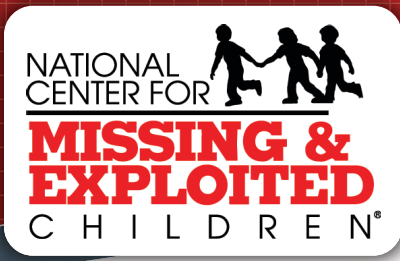


**First responders come
when people call 9-1-1.**

10

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Social Narrative

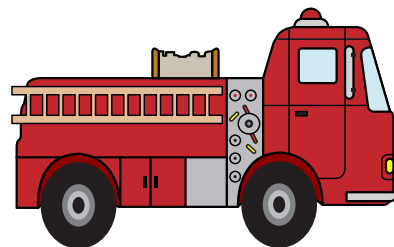
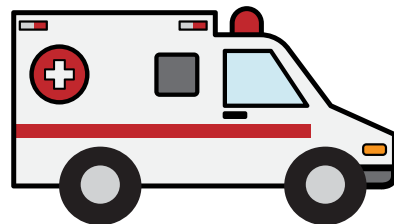
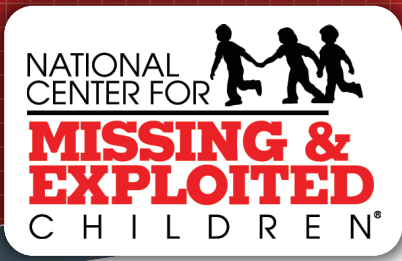


First responders are: police officers, deputies, firefighters, and paramedics.

11

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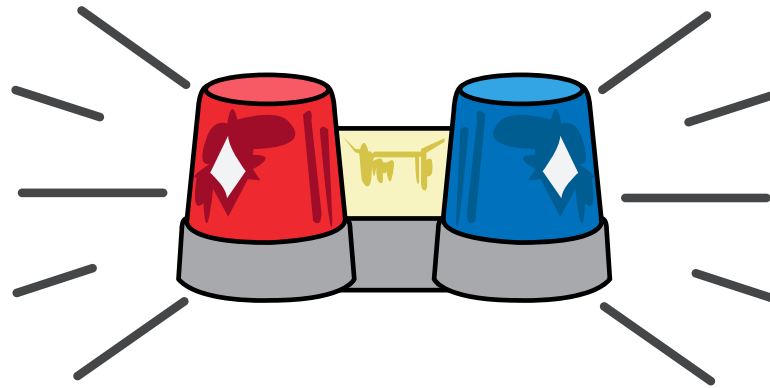
Social Narrative



First responders use special vehicles to help quickly.

12

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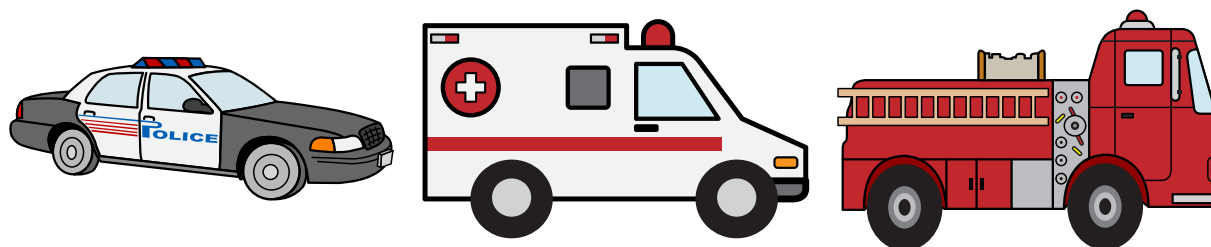
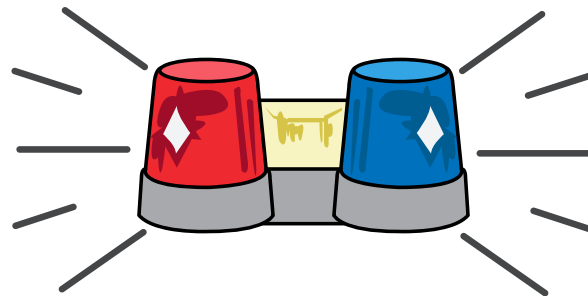


**These special vehicles can be loud !
The sirens tell us they are on the way !**

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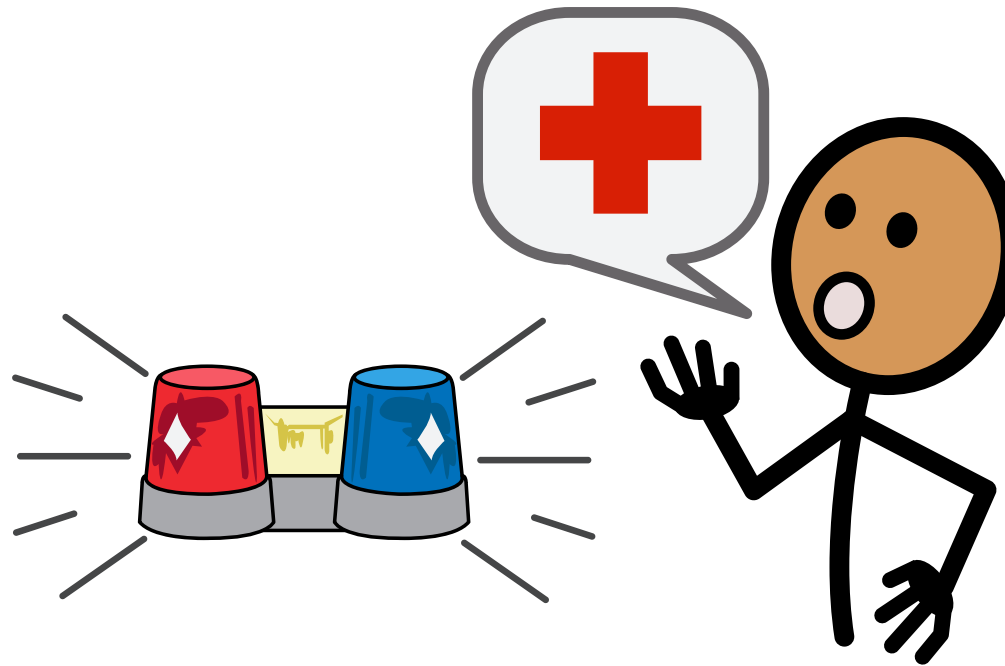
Social Narrative



Police cars, fire engines, and ambulances have flashing lights too.

14

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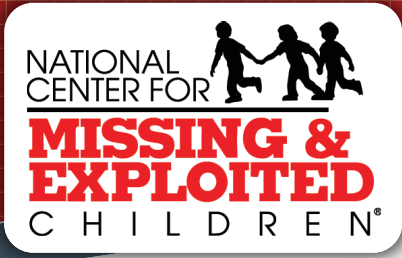


**The flashing lights tell people
that help is coming !**

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Social Narrative



First responders are special people who can help in emergencies.

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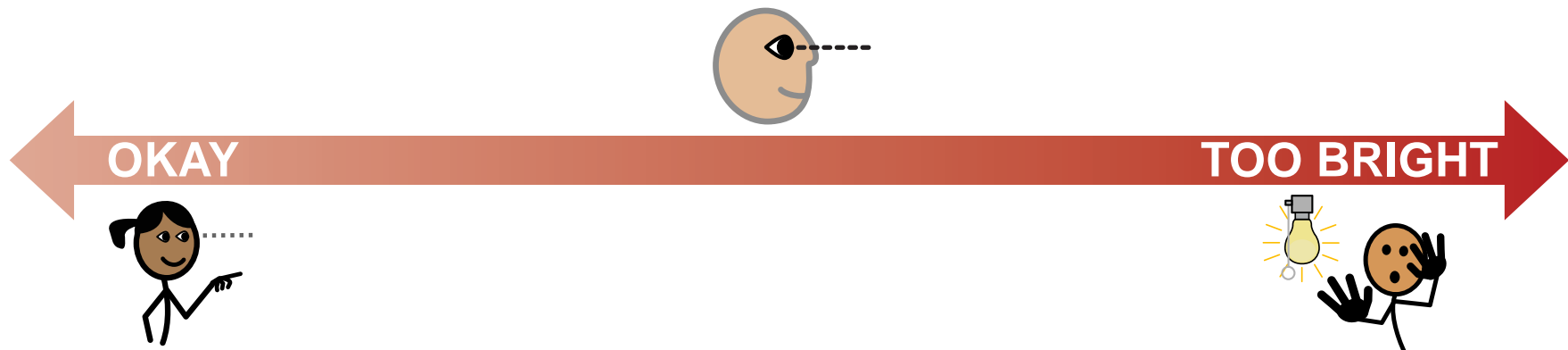
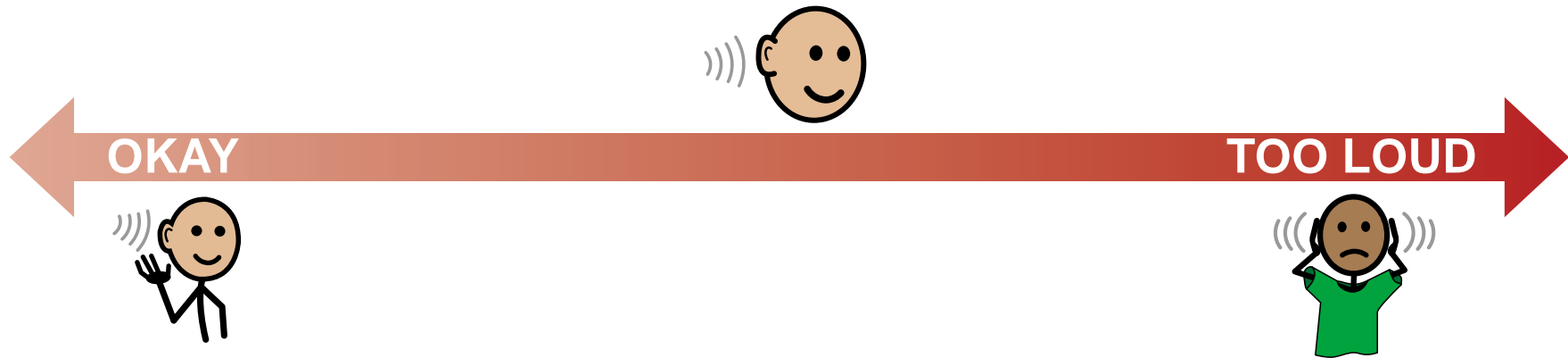
The End

17

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Sensory Scales

Directions: Use these Sensory Scales to help Sensory Event Participants gauge and communicate their sensory well-being. Use the companion piece, I need, to help them identify next steps.






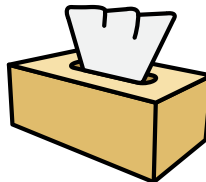

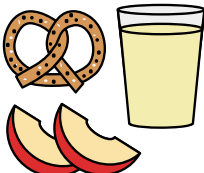



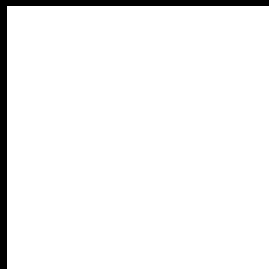
1 of 2

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Sensory Scales

Directions: Use these Sensory Scales to help Sensory Event Participants gauge and communicate their sensory well-being. Use the companion piece, I need, to help them identify next steps.










 I need _____.

<p>noise-cancelling headset</p> 	<p>hat</p> 	<p>sunglasses</p> 	<p>tissue</p> 	<p>bathroom</p> 
<p>snack</p> 	<p>drink</p> 	<p>short break</p> 	<p>nothing</p> 	

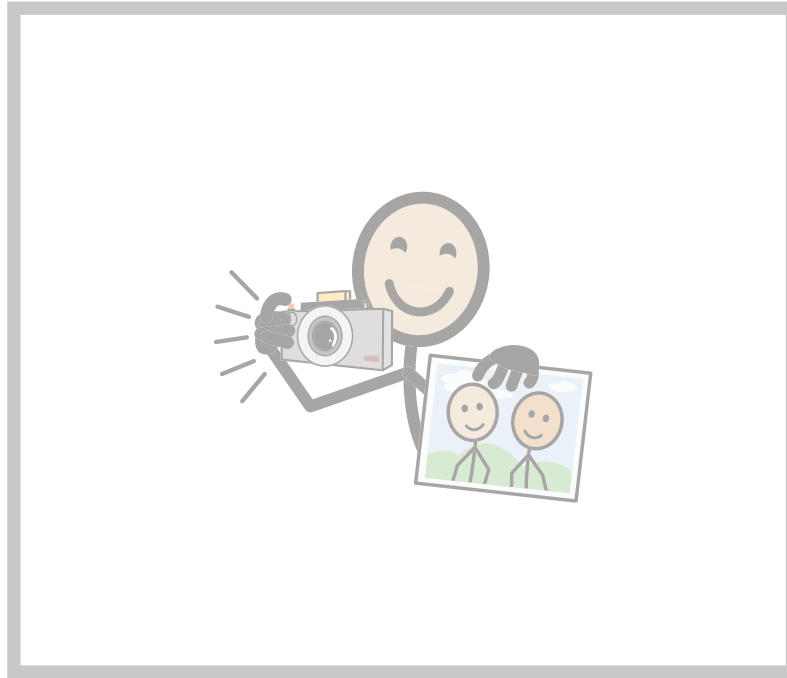
2 of 2

Paragraph Completion

Sometimes, happen and you need
 right now! When you have an
 emergency, you 9-1-1.
 help in emergencies. First responders
 use special . Special vehicles can be
 with flashing .
 Lights and sirens tell us help is .

emergencies 	help 	call 
First responders 	vehicles 	loud 
lights 	coming 	people 

Personal Story

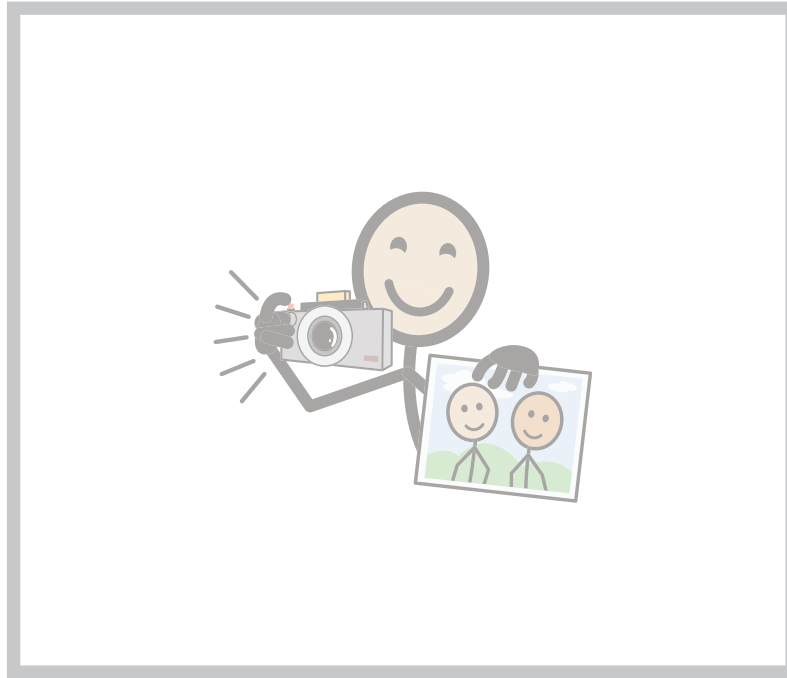


Title: _____

By: _____

1

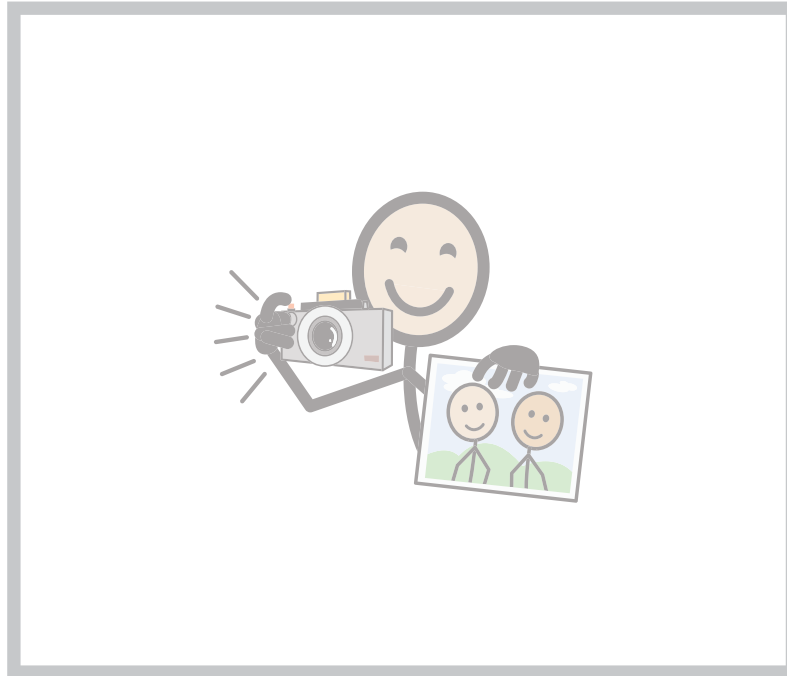
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Today I saw _____.

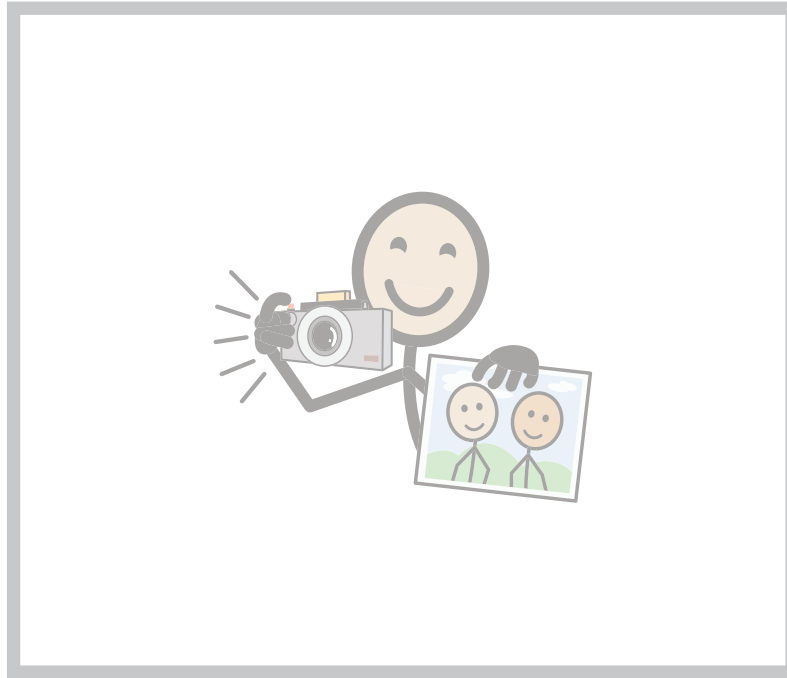
2

Personal Story



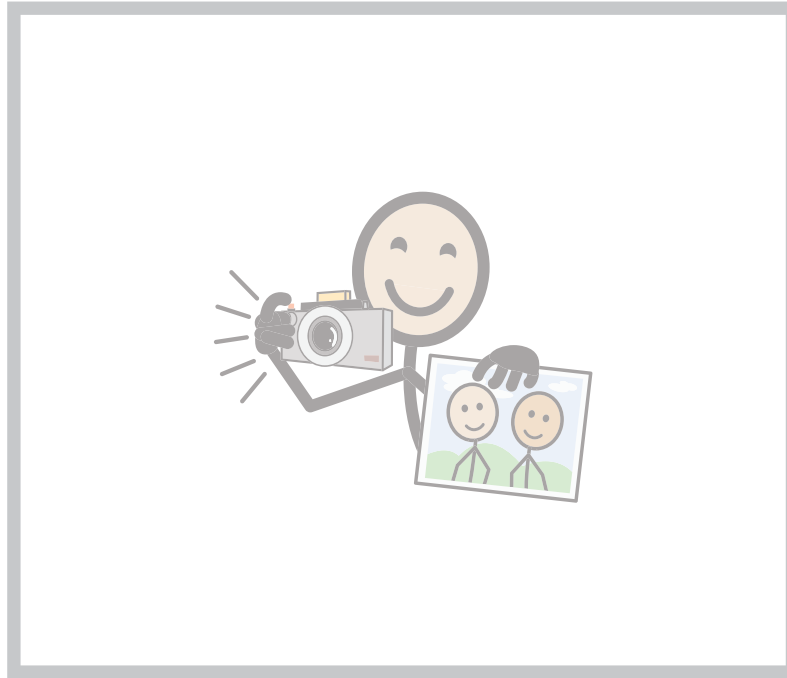
I saw a _____ too.

3



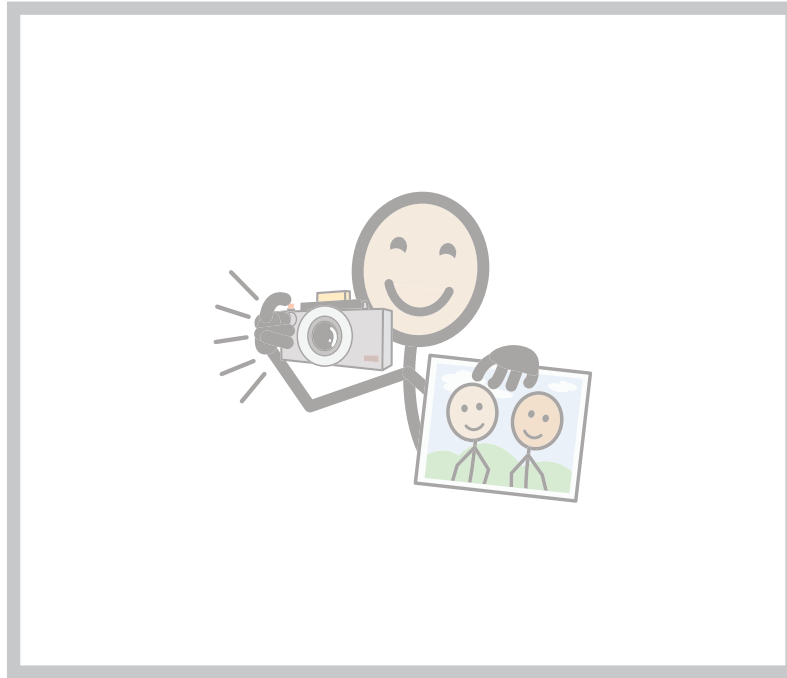
Today I heard _____.

Personal Story

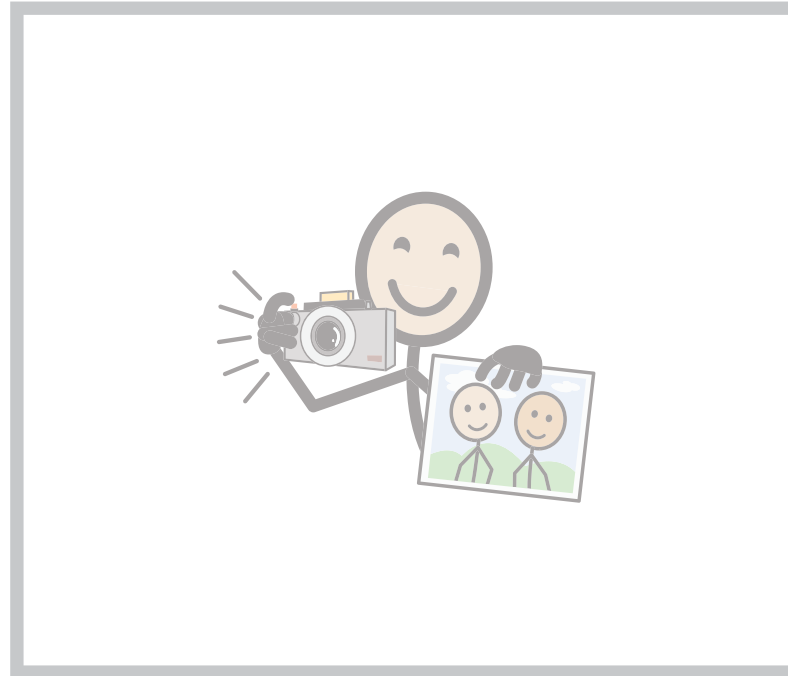


I heard a _____ too.

5

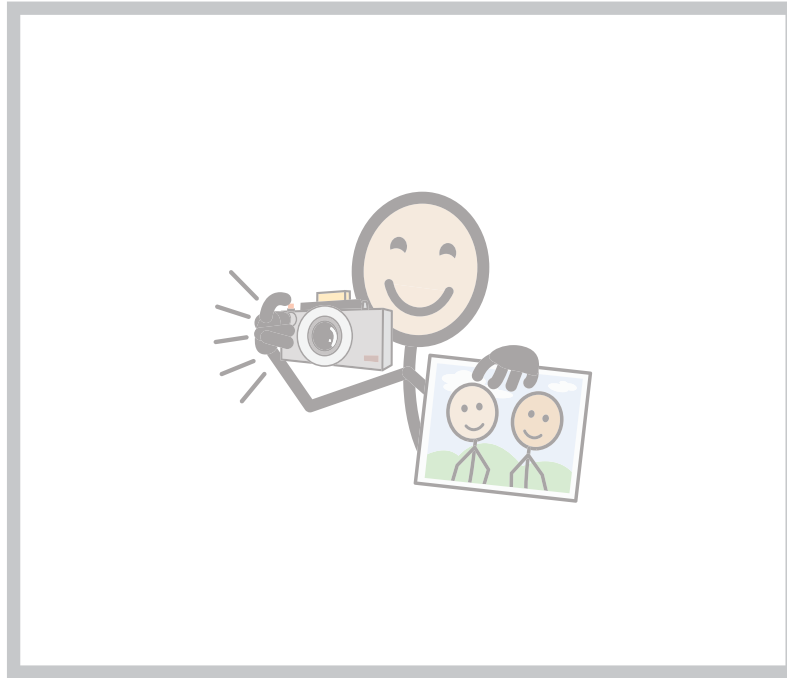


I liked the _____.



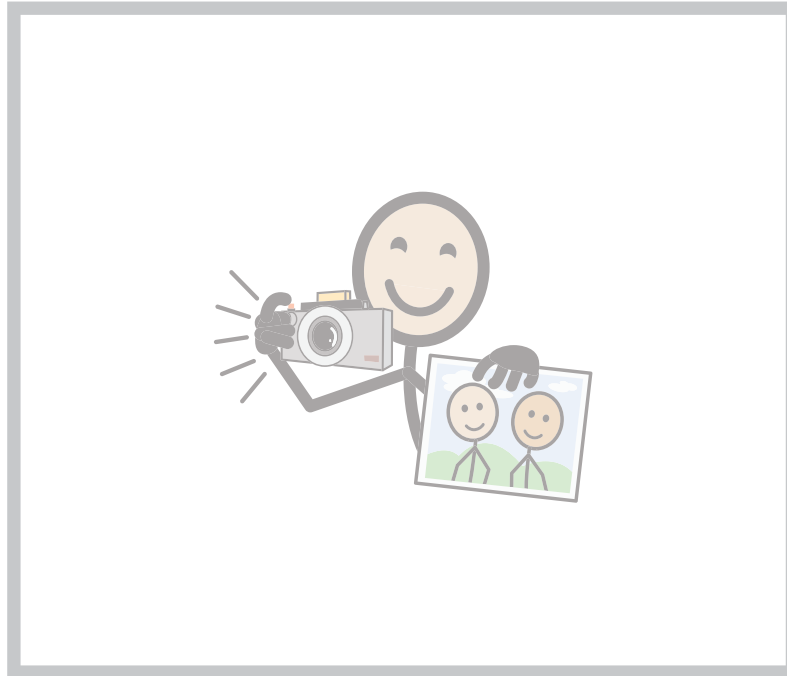
I did not like the _____.

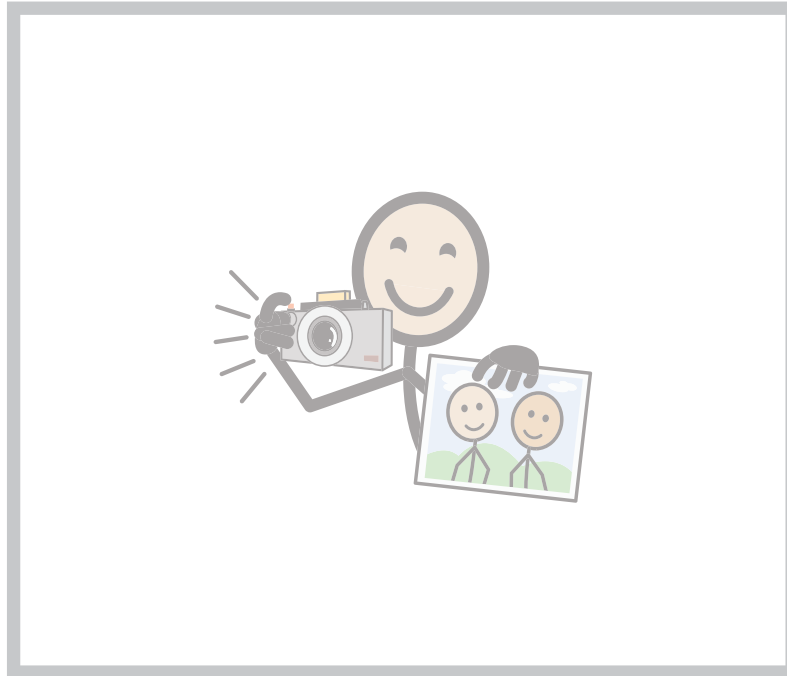
7

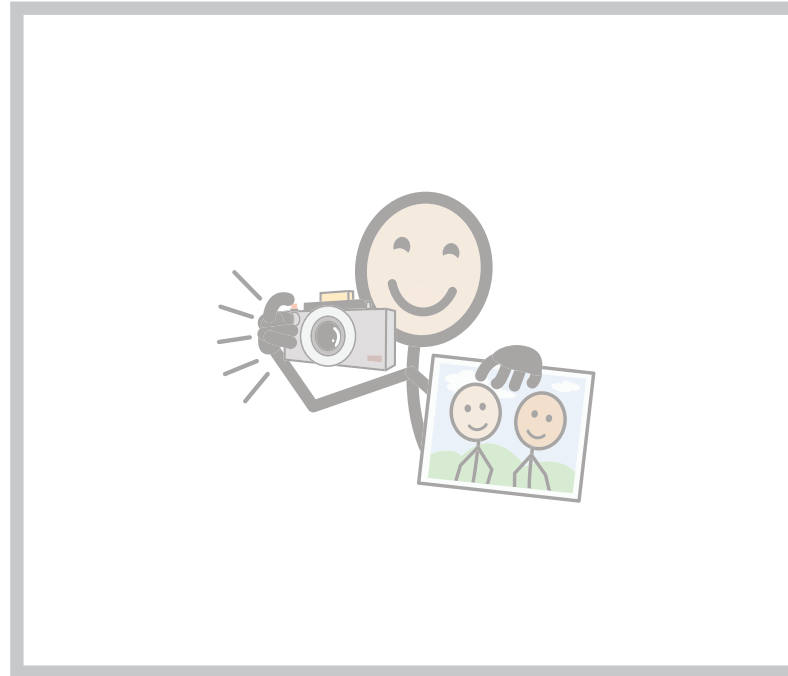


If I need help _____.

Personal Story













The End

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What were the best parts of the day?

special vehicles 	officers 	police dog 	helicopter 	motorcycle 	finished 	other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

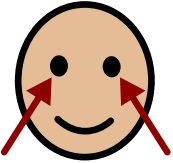
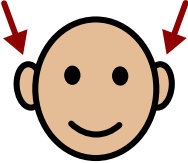

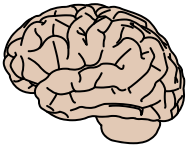




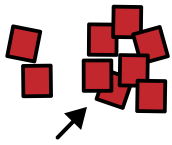
If I have an emergency, I will:

call 911 	talk to officer 	talk to firefighter 	ask for help 	other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Today, I used these to learn:

eyes 	ears 	hands 	brain 	friends 	first responders 	other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



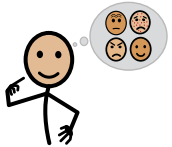
Next year, please have more:

first responders	special vehicles	special animals	lights	sirens	other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



These made me uncomfortable:

first responders	special vehicles	special animals	lights	sirens	other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



This is how I feel about the event:

excited	happy	okay	sad	mad	other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Our news

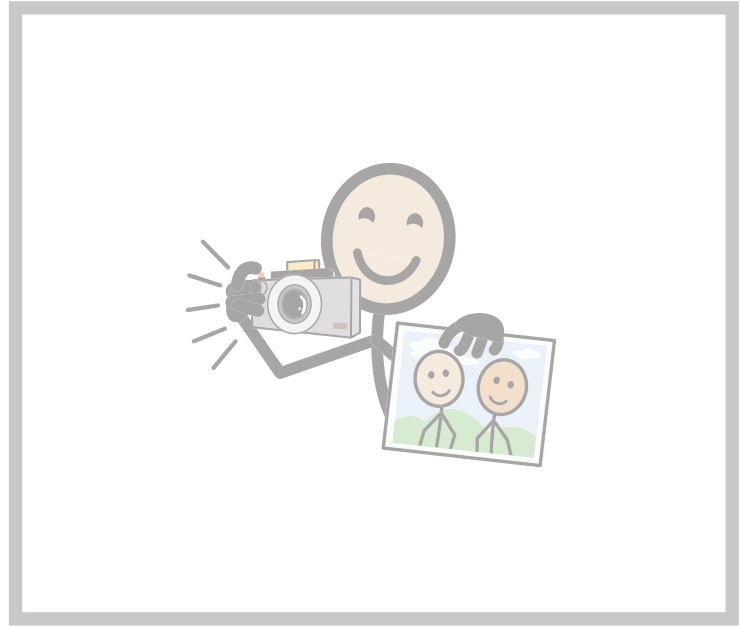
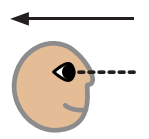


Date:

Title:

News:

Today we saw..



School Newspaper

This made our class feel..

