

Matt Murphy Productions

presents



Study Guide

Dear Teacher:

We have created the following study guide to help make your students' theater experience with *The Berenstain Bears in Family Matters, The Musical* as meaningful as possible. For many, it will be their first time viewing a live theatrical production. We have learned that when teachers discuss the play with their students before and after the production, the experience is more significant and long-lasting. Our study guide provides pre and post performance discussion topics, as well as related activity sheets. These are just suggestions; please feel free to create your own activities and areas for discussion. We hope you and your class enjoy the show!

About the Show

The Berenstain Bears in Family Matters, The Musical combines the plots of three books from the Bears' First Time Books series: *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Junk Food*, *The Berenstain Bears' Trouble at School*, and *The Berenstain Bears Learn About Strangers*.

The Berenstain Bears live in a big oak tree in Bear Country. Brother Bear comes down with a cold and has to stay home from school and soccer practice, and Cousin Freddy temporarily replaces him on the field. Brother is so resentful that he forgets to study for an upcoming math quiz. Meanwhile, outgoing Sister Bear says hello to everyone and everything she passes, and Brother is concerned about her friendly way with strangers. Mama decides the family needs to be more careful about what they eat, especially Papa, who has a bit too much fluff on his tummy. At bedtime, Papa warns Sister about the danger of strangers in a story that gives her an uneasy night's sleep.

The next day, Papa sneaks some goodies into the otherwise healthy lunch Mama gave him. He hides the empty wrappers in the cookie jar. Brother is still angry that he's been benched on the soccer team and doesn't study for his quiz. He gets a very bad grade and has to take the quiz home for his parents to sign. Instead, Brother hides it in the cookie jar, too. Meanwhile, Sister is still very jumpy and nervous about strangers she sees at the Village Green; she rescues a frog from the Green to protect it and puts it in the family cookie jar.

Gramps, Gran, and Mama talk about the difficulty in making sure that young cubs always make the right choices. Mama opens the cookie jar and finds Papa's candy wrappers, Brother's test, and Sister's frog. Gramps, Gran, and Mama put their heads together and realize how they can help their family. They all decide to talk with Brother, Papa, and Sister individually. On a trip to the bog, Gramps shows Brother a wagon he had accidentally driven into the mud when he took a wrong turn – just like the wrong turn Brother took when he didn't finish his schoolwork. Meanwhile, Gran asks Papa to try on his old track uniform. The clothes are much too tight because of all the weight he's gained over the years from not eating healthy food. Mama explains to Sister that while it's good to be cautious around strangers, she doesn't need to be afraid of everyone. Just like apples, it's what's inside people that counts – you can't always tell from the outside if someone is a "bad apple."

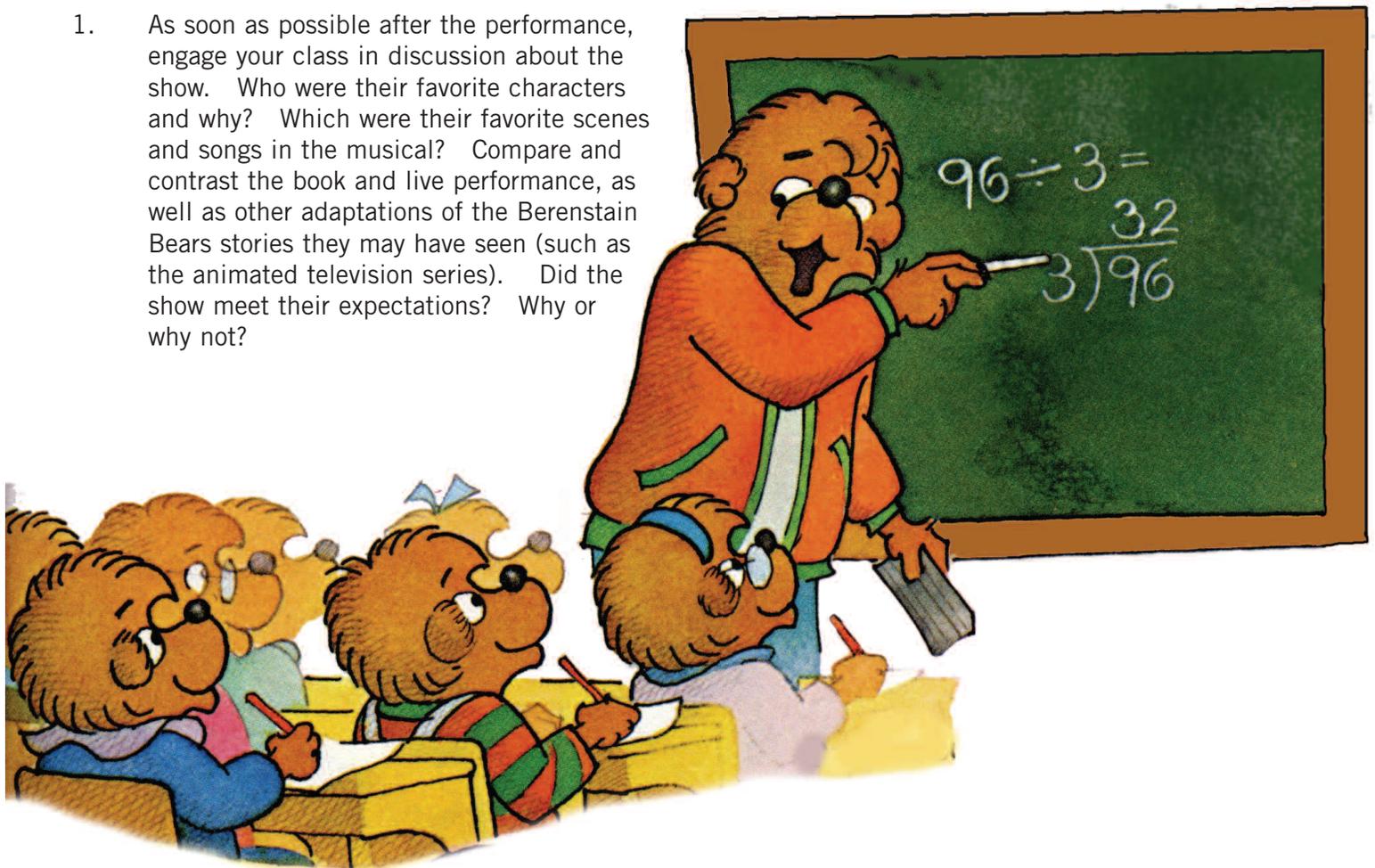
Though bears and cubs sometimes run into trouble, the Berenstain Bears know that in the end, you can always count on your loved ones to help you through your problems.

Pre-Performance Discussion

1. With your class, read the following books: *The Berenstain Bears Learn About Strangers*, *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Junk Food*, and *The Berenstain Bears' Trouble at School*. Our musical is closely based on these stories. In musicals, characters often sing to punctuate action or illuminate character. On the basis of the stories you have read together, what moments do your students think will be “musicalized?”
2. In our musical, there are fewer actors than characters – “Brother Bear” and “Sister Bear” are the only actors who play one role. Tell your students to keep their eyes peeled to see if they can identify which roles each actor plays. For example, “Cousin Freddy” also plays “Gramps,” and “Lizzie” also plays “Gran.”
3. Discuss the various design elements that go into putting a show onstage, namely the costume and scenic designs. What will the family’s tree house look like? How will some of the other locations be represented (i.e. the Village Green, the school, etc.)? Do your students think the costumes will look exactly like the characters in the books? Will there be real talking bears onstage?
4. Review proper theatre etiquette with your class. They may be seeing our show as part of a class trip with many other schools attending. They should carefully follow their teacher’s or group leader’s directions. During the show, they should be quiet, so they do not disturb other audience members (and the actors!) during the performance. However, actors love cheers and applause, especially at the end of songs and when the show is over. This is a great way to thank actors for all their hard work in performing this show for you!

Post-Performance Discussion

1. As soon as possible after the performance, engage your class in discussion about the show. Who were their favorite characters and why? Which were their favorite scenes and songs in the musical? Compare and contrast the book and live performance, as well as other adaptations of the Berenstain Bears stories they may have seen (such as the animated television series). Did the show meet their expectations? Why or why not?





2. Why is it important to be wary of strangers? Are all strangers bad people? Why or why not? What rules do your students follow regarding talking to people they don't know, or accepting candy, gifts, or car rides from strangers?
3. Discuss the concept "it's what inside that counts." What does this mean? If your students see a beautifully wrapped box, what are their assumptions about the quality of the gift inside based on the appearance of the outside? Have they ever received an incredible gift inside a poorly wrapped box, or a disappointing present inside a gorgeously decorated box? Were they surprised when they opened it? Likewise, do they ever make assumptions about people based on how they look? Were these assumptions correct or incorrect?
4. When Brother Bear got sick he received a homework packet, which he ignored, so he fell behind in school. Why is important to keep up with schoolwork? What might happen if you don't keep up with your work? Younger students may connect better with the idea of cleaning their rooms. Point out that it's much easier to spend just a few minutes a day to pick up belongings, rather than letting toys and clothes accumulate so that you have to spend hours cleaning.
5. Brother Bear was very jealous of Cousin Freddy for replacing him on the soccer team. Have your students ever felt similarly envious? How did that make them feel? How could Brother have better dealt with his anger? How do your students work through their own feelings of jealousy?
6. Papa Bear loved eating sweets. What happens to your body if you eat too much candy and other junk food? What role does exercise play in maintaining a healthy body? What are some good-for-you snacks that Papa could be eating instead of sweets?
7. A major theme of the show is the importance of family. Families come in all shapes and sizes. Discuss the idea of "family" with your students. Who do they consider their family? Do they always get along? How do they resolve problems? Do they discuss problems with family members, like the Berenstain Bears do?

Activities

1. ANYTIME SNACKS and ONCE-IN-A-WHILE SNACKS

With your class, brainstorm a list of their favorite snacks, and write all suggestions on the board. Have your students divide the list of foods into “anytime snacks” (i.e. vegetables, fruits, milk, cheese, nuts) and “once-in-a-while snacks” (i.e. candy, soda, potato chips, etc.) Advanced students may measure out the recommended serving size of each food and perform research on how many calories are in each item. They may be surprised at how many “anytime snacks” they can eat for the same amount of calories as one “once-in-a-while” snack!

2. FOOD LOG

Instruct students to write down all the food they eat in a 5-day week (1 day for younger grades). The log should include everything they consume, down to the last M & M. Once the food log is complete, categorize foods by group (proteins, carbohydrates, fats). New labeling guidelines are making it much easier to obtain nutritional information about all foods. The "Nutrition Facts" label can supply good information. On larger food packages, this label gives the breakdown (in grams) of a balanced diet. If a label does not have nutritional information, there will almost always be a phone number or an address that can be used to obtain the nutritional content of a prepared food. Students can call or write for the information, or teachers can assemble it for the younger grade levels.

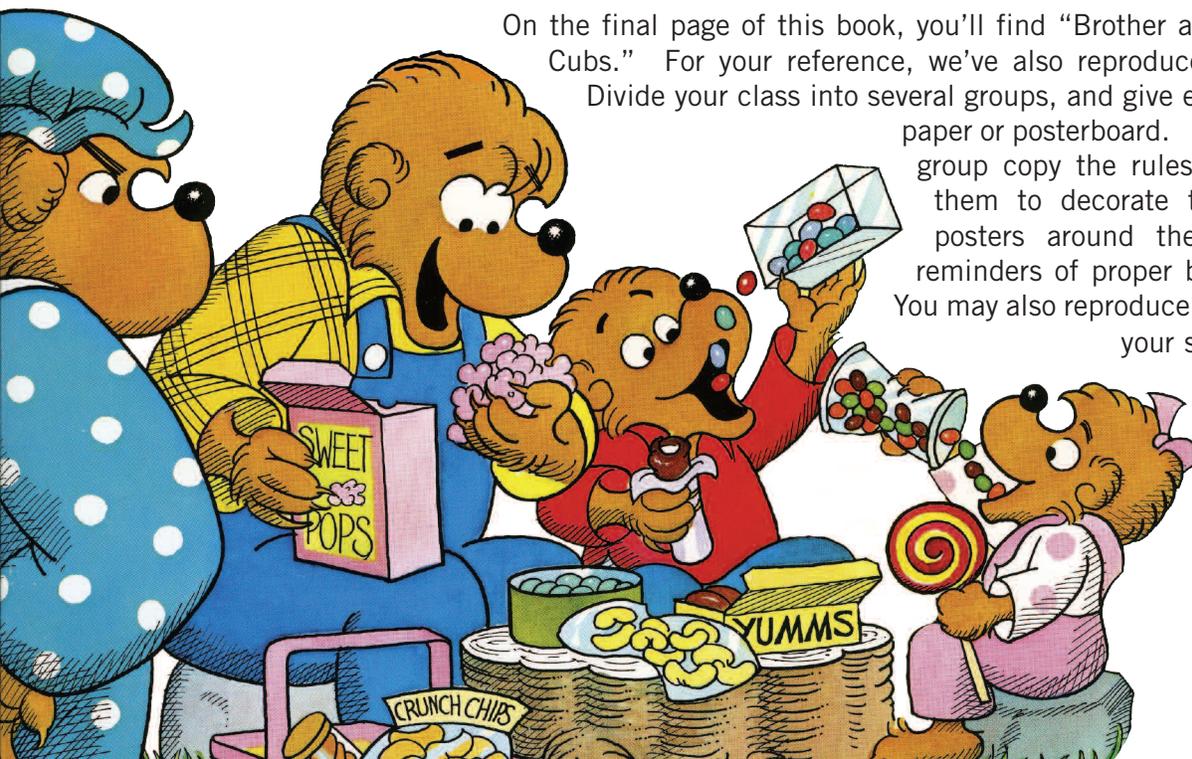
Students can use this nutritional information to calculate their average daily intake of calories, protein, and carbohydrates. They now have a profile of their own diets which they can compare to recommended nutritional models. At the end of the nutrition unit, discuss the completed profile in comparison to recommended nutritional models. What can the student change to improve their diet?

3. BROTHER AND SISTER BEAR'S RULES FOR CUBS

Co-author Jan Berenstain says she receives more letters and feedback about *The Berenstain Bears Learn About Strangers* than any other book she and her husband have written. In fact, because of this book, the fictional family was named the official “Spokesbears” for Prevent Child Abuse America in 2007.

On the final page of this book, you'll find “Brother and Sister Bear's Rules for Cubs.” For your reference, we've also reproduced it in this study guide.

Divide your class into several groups, and give each group a large sheet of paper or posterboard. Have the members of each group copy the rules onto the paper, and ask them to decorate the signs. Display the posters around the classroom to serve as reminders of proper behavior around strangers. You may also reproduce this page and distribute to your students for coloring.



4. MORALS AND FABLES

Each Berenstain Bears book has a very clear lesson or moral. What were the morals taught in the musical? Why was it important for Brother to tell his parents about his poor test score? Why did Mama want Papa to eat fewer sweets? What did Mama mean by telling Sister about “good apples” and “bad apples?” Can your students think of other stories with morals? What are the lessons behind “The Three Little Pigs” and Aesop’s fables, including “The Boy Who Cried Wolf?”

Your students can create their own fables, either on their own or in a group. Review the basic concepts of fables:

- 1) They are short stories that communicate clear life-long character lessons.
- 2) They feature talking animals.

Brainstorm a list of common morals, like “cheaters never win,” “slow and steady wins the race,” and “treat others as you would like to be treated.” With the animal characters, have them create a story. (For a simple fable-writing lesson, visit <http://www.slideshare.net/lolaceituno/how-to-write-a-fable>)

If you create a single story with the entire class, you can assign each member of the class to illustrate a different sentence. These illustrated pages can be displayed around the room in sequential order or bound like a book.

5. LETTER WRITING

With your students, review proper letter-writing form, including the heading (return address and date), salutation, body, closing (i.e. “Sincerely,” “Love,” “Your Friend,” etc.), and signature. Have your students write a letter to their favorite member of the Bear family telling them what they liked best about the show. Older students may wish to offer the characters advice, particularly regarding Papa’s sweet tooth, Sister’s fear of strangers, and Brother’s jealousy of Cousin Freddy and avoidance of his schoolwork. If you wish, you can also have them address an envelope and mail the letters to:

The Berenstain Bears
c/o Theatreworks USA, Matt Murphy Productions
151 West 26th Street
New York, NY 10001

We look forward to reading your students’ letters!

Resources

WEBSITES FOR CUBS:

- <http://www.berenstainbears.com/> -- The official Berenstain Bears website, featuring interactive games and videos.
- <http://www.randomhouse.com/kids/berenstainbears/> -- Home for the Bears’ “First Time Books” series, featuring reproducible handouts and a few online activities - parental guidance suggested. You may also download extensive teacher’s guides, including a “100 Days of School” lesson plan based on the book series at <http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/guides/title/#B>.
- <http://pbskids.org/berenstainbears/index.html> -- Official website for the PBS television series based on the books. Features video clips, lots of online activities, and downloadable coloring pages.

WEBSITES FOR BEARS:

- <http://www.berenstainbearstreehouse.com/index.php> -- Website for The Stan Berenstain Foundation, which promotes literature and arts for children through direct interaction with books and arts material.
- <http://childrensbooks.about.com/od/authorsillustrato/a/berenstainbears.htm> -- Interview with Jan and Mike Berenstain.
- <http://www.berenstainbears.net> -- A fan site, featuring a treasure trove of Berenstain Bears links.
- <http://www.webenglishteacher.com/berenstain.html> -- Lots of suggestions for using the Berenstain Bears books in your classroom.

BOOKS:

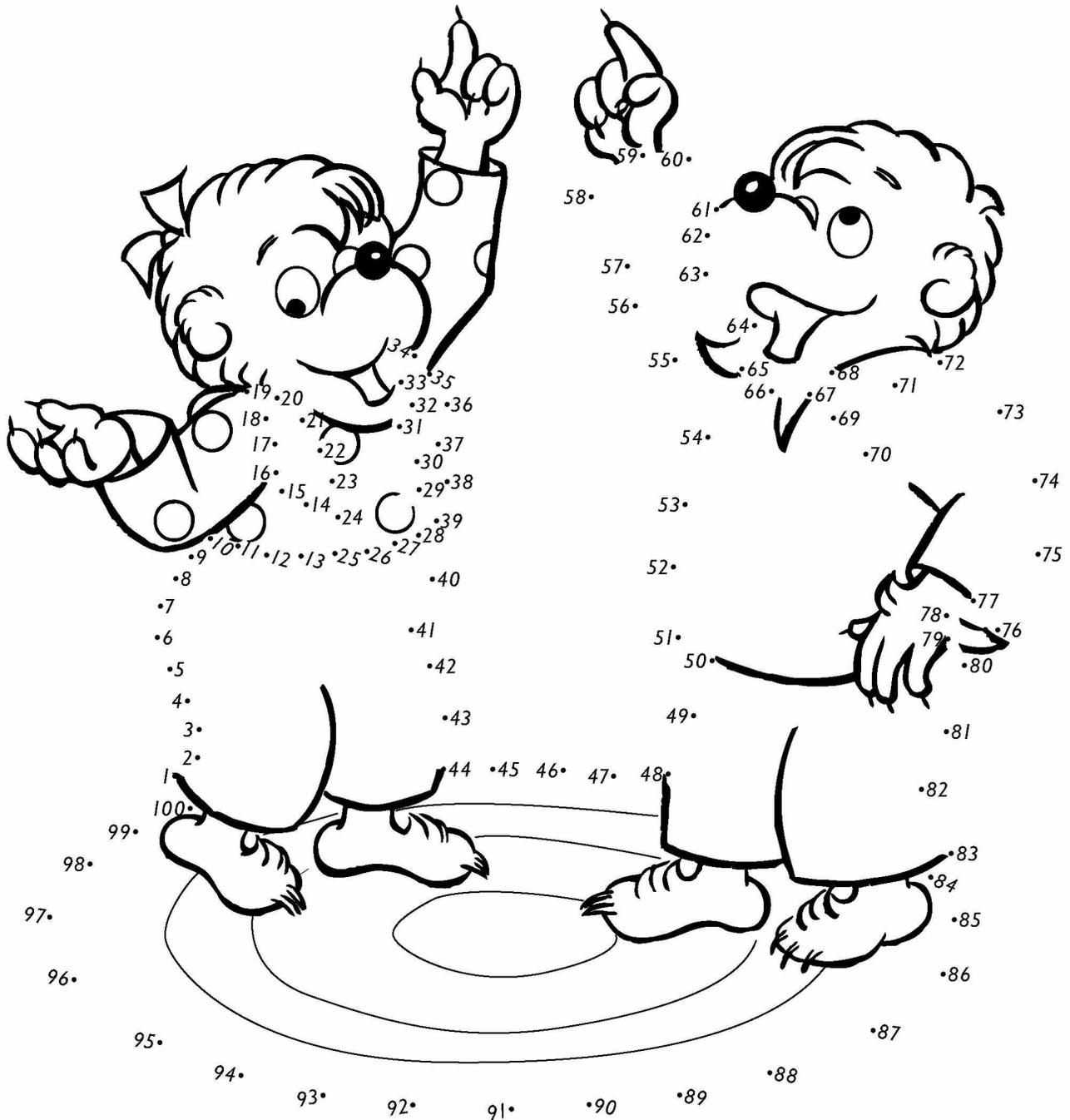
Over 250 books about the Berenstain Bears have been published. In addition to these, your students may also enjoy *Down a Sunny Dirt Road*, Stan and Jan Berenstain’s kid-oriented autobiography, published by Random House Books for Young Readers.

The Berenstain Bears

CONNECT 100 DOTS!

Connect the 100 dots in number order to unveil the picture below.

Name: _____



Educators: Please make copies of this activity sheet for your students.

Note to teacher: this text is taken verbatim from The Berenstain Bears Learn About Strangers. We leave it to your discretion as to whether or not you choose to distribute this page to your students.

Brother and Sister Bear's Rules for Cubs and Kids

1. Never talk to a stranger.
2. Never take candy or other gifts from a stranger.
3. Never ever go anywhere with a stranger.
4. Don't keep secrets from your parents — especially if someone asks you to.
5. Your body is your own personal property and nobody else's business — especially the private parts. (When you're real little, of course, Mama or Papa may help you with your bath or in the bathroom — and your doctor is in the body business and will have to examine you from time to time, even when you're not little.)
6. Use your common sense. We can't have rules for everything. Common sense is what keeps us safe by telling us what to do in situations that are not covered by rules.

