

BE SAFE the Movie: WHAT TO KNOW

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1. BE SAFE The Movie & BE SAFE Teaching Edition are wonderful new resources to help teens and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other disabilities learn to BE SAFE in the community.
 - BE SAFE uses video modeling to show what to do and say in encounters with the police.
 - BE SAFE Teaching Edition offers 300 pages of activities and materials so that diverse learners can master the important skills shown in The Movie.
 - MOTTO: Don't leave safety to chance
 - We use Person-First Language and say "a person with autism" not "autistic people"
2. The story behind BE SAFE: Preventing tragedy
 - Co-Executive producer is Joey Travolta of Inclusion Films
 - Made by and for people with ASD and related disabilities
 - Actors have ASD and other disabilities; interact with real police
 - For home and school and community use, to get proactive about safety
 - Has English captions and Spanish subtitles
3. Messages covered in BE SAFE The Movie and the Teaching Edition:
 - What laws are and why we follow them
 - How the police protect and serve
 - Police equipment/boundaries
 - When the police tell you to do something, just do it
 - Tools to self-disclose your autism to the police (especially important for non-verbal people)
 - Protect your right to remain silent
 - What to expect in a medical emergency/how to call 911
4. Emily Iland offers a variety of safety trainings in English and Spanish
 - A. BE SAFE Interactive Screening is for people with ASD and their families or staff along with local police. We watch scenes from BE SAFE The Movie and do fun activities. For example:
 - Officers explain the tools on their duty belts but also set limits about them.
 - Everyone who wants to gets role play asking a real officer for help and try on handcuffs, to have the motor and sensory experience along with the personal interaction with the police.
 - B. Emily has personally trained more than 4,000 LAPD officers about autism (including the SWAT team, 911 operators, jailers and zoo police!).
 - Her "Experience Autism program is an interactive way to help officers recognize and respond to people with ASD," most of all developing understanding and empathy

Several true stories of unfortunate encounters are part of the inspiration behind BE SAFE The Movie and the Teaching Edition. These scenarios and the lessons to be learned from them feature prominently in BE SAFE. Some names and details have been changed to protect the identity of the persons involved.

- Sam, a fourteen-year-old with autism, was being bullied by another boy in his special needs class every day for weeks on end. Sam did nothing for a very long time but one day he fought back and things got physical. Sam's mother was very upset that the school did not seem to take the long-term bullying or the physical altercation seriously, so several days later she called the police to press charges against the bully. The police arrived at the high school, arrested both boys, and took them away in handcuffs. The mother did not know that the police arrest both participants in a physical altercation because they are both suspects in an assault until investigators get to the bottom of the situation.
- Arlo was a nonverbal young man with autism who was fascinated by anything with wheels. One day he saw a police motorcycle unattended, and he climbed on. When the motorcycle officer returned and saw Arlo on the motorcycle, he told the boy to get off. Arlo did not move. When the officer tried to forcibly remove Arlo, he fought back, breaking the officer's nose. Arlo was arrested for assaulting an officer.
- Tom was a young man with autism who was a big fan of movies, and loved to say lines from movies. His family was amazed how he came up with movie lines for every situation. Tom was getting ready to drive, and his mother was worried about one thing in particular: that Tom would say something to a police officer that Jim Carrey said to an officer in one of his movies! None of the dialogue from Jim Carrey movies would be appropriate to say to an officer in real life. The temptation would be really big for Tom, and he would have to resist the urge. Tom made a deal with his mom that in exchange for the privilege of getting to drive, he would never say anything Jim Carrey ever said in any of his movies if he got pulled over.
- Mark was thirteen year old who was significantly impacted by his ASD. He also had cognitive challenges and functioned more like a 9 year old. Mark had committed a crime in the community, which had been reported. Sheriff's deputies arrived at the high school campus and went to the office, asking where to find Mark. The secretary directed them to Mark's special education classroom. The deputies knocked on the door and told the teacher that they needed to talk to Mark in the school office. Mark went with the deputies.

As they were walking together, the deputies asked Mark a question: "Do you know the difference between right and wrong?" Mark said yes, he did. Mark sat alone with two deputies in a school office. No adults were present and his parents did not know that Mark was being interviewed. The deputies asked if it was OK if they taped the interview and Mark said, "Yes." Mark confessed on tape to a felony crime. The school called Mark's parents at work to say that Mark was under arrest and had been taken to the Sheriff's station. The District Attorney decided to prosecute the case.

Later, his educational advocate asked Mark why he did not ask to talk to a lawyer like they do on TV. Mark answered that there weren't any lawyers at school, and anyway he was just a kid and

did not have money to pay one. [In California, police can question any child over the age of 8 without a parent or other adult present if the child answers “Yes” to the “Gladys R Question,” “Do you know the difference between right and wrong?”].

- A young driver with ASD, Sarah, was in the far left lane of a busy street waiting to turn left onto Main Street. A traffic officer stood in the intersection, gesturing that no one could turn left, instructing drivers to continue straight on. (There had been a bad crash on Main Street and the road was closed). Sarah did not follow the instructions from the officer. She did not want to go down Main Street, she just wanted to pull into the first driveway on the right, a fast food restaurant.

The officer asked a colleague to take his place. He chased after Sarah’s car but she did not notice him. As she came to a stop in the parking lot, the officer banged on the back of the car, startling Sarah. She rolled down her window to talk to the officer. He was very, very angry at Sarah for ignoring his directions. She argued that she did not want to go down Main Street, she just wanted to turn in to the parking lot. The officer was angry that Sarah was making excuses. He took out his ticket book to give her a ticket, but was called away.

- Joshua was a 22-year-old with autism who was a very good driver except that he occasionally drove too fast. One afternoon he was pulled over for speeding. The officer had a hard time understanding James’ speech (related to his autism). The officer asked Joshua if he had taken drugs and Joshua said, “YES.” [He had taken vitamins that day and because he buys them at a drug store, he considered them drugs.] The officer told Joshua to get out of the car for a field sobriety test. Joshua was not able to walk the line [because of balance problems related to a cerebral lesion]. At this point the officer was convinced that Joshua was driving under the influence and arrested him. Joshua’s car was impounded and he was taken to jail. But the story does not end there.

Even though he can talk, Joshua was confused by everything that was happening. He had problems communicating with staff at the jail. He did not tell anyone that he had autism, that he had only taken vitamins or that he has balance problems due to a lesion. Because he was over the age of 21, he was treated like any other adult who would have to manage the situation on his own. He would have to wait in jail until the blood alcohol test was processed, but the lab was already closed. Joshua did not understand the opportunity to phone home and let his mother know what was going on.

Joshua’s mother did not know where he was or why he did not come home that night. Frantic, she called hospitals and finally the police station where Joshua had been taken. Once she arrived on the scene she advocated for him and was able to explain Joshua’s way of speaking, and his balance issue. With that information, the officer in charge realized that a mistake had been made. Joshua was released to go home with his mother with apologies.