Stranger Safety Lesson Plan: Follow Your Instincts
(Grades 3-5, 45 minutes)

Learning Objectives: Students will be able to identify what instincts are and how to use them.

Materials:
- *Henry’s Story: Creating Online Identities* video from commonsense.org
- Masking tape
- Stopwatch

Preparations:
Run a line of tape on the floor down the center of the room.

Lesson

Introduction: We encounter strangers every day and sometimes it can be hard to tell just by looks if a stranger is safe or dangerous. Explain:

- A Stranger is any person you do not know personally and can be of any gender, age, or race.
- Sometimes we need to ask strangers for help. For example, if you get lost on a bike ride to your friend’s house, you will need to ask someone to help you find your way home. How can you tell which people are safe to ask for help?
- According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, instincts are natural impulses. Like feelings, they are something we just know without understanding how we know them.
- Ask students to offer real-life examples of their instincts.

Activities:
1. Watch the video. Afterward allow discussion time for students about how they may change their identity in different settings like home, school, and online. Why do we do this and what do our instincts say about it?
2. Follow Your Instincts game:
   a. Move tables/desks out of the way so there is empty space on both sides of the tape line you created. Ask all students to start by standing in a single file line on the tape line.
   b. Read one of the included scenarios and ask students to decide whether this person is safe or unsafe, using only their initial instincts, by moving to one side of the tape line. After each scenario, students have 5 seconds to step to their right (the safe side) or their left (the unsafe side).
   c. Any student who does not move to one side of the tape line before time is up will be out of the game.
   d. After each round, encourage discussion about why students chose the side they did. Play continues until there is one student standing or your lesson time runs out.
Learning Outcomes:
As students move throughout the rest of their day, they should think about and/or document times they “heard” their instincts guiding them.

Follow Your Instincts Game Scenarios
1. While waiting for the bus, a man who looks kind of familiar tells you that your mom got sick after you left and sent him to bring you back home. Do you go with him?

2. You are home by yourself and the doorbell rings. You can see the mail carrier on your porch through the window. She looks as though she needs something signed. Do you open the door?

3. You are playing an interactive game online when someone you’ve never seen before messages you. They ask a question about the game and then ask for your real name. Do you message them back?

4. You are riding your bike home from the park and notice a junky van slowly staying behind you. Do you go straight home?

5. You are at the skate park when a young woman stops to ask if you can help her find her lost dog down the street. Do you follow her and help?

6. You are walking home from school when your neighbor, Mrs. Jones, calls out from her front door. She wants you to come in and help her get something she dropped behind the couch. Do you go in and help?

7. While scrolling your Facebook newsfeed, a boy sends you a friend request. You don’t know him but it says you have 5 friends in common. Do you accept the request?

8. You are home alone when the phone rings. A woman is on the line saying she works with your dad and he has asked her to call you for some information they need for something at his work. She asks for your address. Do you tell her?

9. You are at school when a man, who you have not seen before, says he is a new teacher and asks you to walk him to the closest bathroom. Do you walk with him?

10. You just got home from school and realize you forgot your key. There is a hidden key on the porch, but you can’t reach it. Your mom’s best friend is walking by and asks if you need help. Do you ask her to reach the key?