The What-If-Situations-Test (WIST; Nemerofsky, 1986) was developed to measure performance of preschool-age children in sexual abuse prevention programs. The WIST is constructed from the learning objectives of the Children’s Primary Prevention Training Program (Nemerofsky, Sanford, Baer, Cage, & Wood, 1986) and is composed of situations that require the child to determine how he or she would respond. The test items measure the skills and concepts taught in the prevention program and address skills and concepts thought to be essential in reducing the risk of sexual victimization (Conte, Rosen, & Saperstein, 1986; Wurtele, 1987). The WIST can be used as a pretest measure, as well as a measure of performance in sexual abuse prevention programs.

Description

The WIST consists of 29 items addressing (a) the names and location of the child’s “private parts,” (b) appropriate requests to touch or to examine the child’s genitals by physicians, (c) requests for the child to touch or examine the child’s genitals by others, (d) requests for the child to touch another individual’s genitals, (e) the child’s right to refuse to be touched, (f) appropriate requests to touch (hug/kiss) the child by others, (g) requests to keep secrets, (h) requests to keep secrets about genital touching, (i) attempts to provide gifts/bribes/presents/incentives to touch child’s genitals or have the child touch the genitals of another person, (j) actions to be taken if the child was afraid and/or uncomfortable, and (k) the child’s role in potential abuse situations.

Eleven items require the child to make a determination about the appropriateness of an action or situation (e.g., If someone touches a child’s private parts, should the child tell?). Seventeen items deal with actions that a child should take in abuse situations (e.g., What would you do if someone touched your private parts?). One item addresses the names and locations of the child’s private parts.

Response Mode and Timing

The WIST is administered, on an individual basis, by the child’s teacher. The child’s responses are written down verbatim and scored by comparison to a key. The test requires approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Scoring

Scores can range from 0 to 64, with higher scores indicating greater understanding of child sexual abuse prevention skills and concepts. WIST items are differently keyed according to the nature of the item. The 11 WIST items requiring the child to make a determination about the appropriateness of an action or situation are scored 0 points for a wrong answer and 1 point for a correct response. The 17 items addressing actions a child could take in abuse situations receive 1 point for an assertive or motoric response, 2 points for disclosure, and 3 points for both an assertive and a disclosure response. The WIST item that requires the child to name and locate his or her private parts receives 0 points for a wrong answer, 1 point for a partial answer (e.g., child names only one private part), and 2 points for a complete correct answer (e.g., a girl’s private parts are her vagina, buttocks, and breasts).

Reliability

In a sample of 1,044 3- to 6-year-old children (Nemerofsky, 1991), the Cronbach’s alpha for the WIST was .83, indicating good reliability.

Validity

In a study using the WIST pretest mean score as the covariate, WIST posttest mean scores of children who had completed a sexual abuse prevention training program were compared to the control group of children who had not received the training. A significant difference was found between groups, with the experimental group of children scoring significantly higher on the WIST posttest following participation in the sexual abuse prevention training program than the control group of children who had not received the training (Nemerofsky, Carran, & Rosenberg, 1994).
References


Exhibit

*What-If-Situations-Test*

**Child Code Number:**

**Circle:** Pretest Posttest

1. Tell me the names of your private parts.
2. What would you do if someone touched you in a way you did not like?
3. What would you do if someone touched you in a way that you liked?
4. What would you do if someone asked you to keep a secret?
5. What would you do if someone tried to touch your private parts?
6. What would you do if someone touched you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?
7. Is it OK for a mom or dad to give you a hug if you want one? (Circle) Yes No
8. Do you have to let anyone touch you on your private parts? (Circle) Yes No
9. What would you do if someone touched your private parts?
10. What would you do if someone said they would give you a present if you would keep a secret?
11. If someone makes a child touch their private parts:
   a. Did the child do anything wrong? Yes No
   b. Is it the child’s fault? Yes No
   c. Should the child tell? Yes No
   d. Should the child ask for help? Yes No
12. What would you do if someone asked you to touch their private parts?
13. What would you do if someone asked you to keep a secret about touching private parts?
14. What would you do if someone said they would give you a present if you would touch their private parts?
15. What would you do if someone made you touch their private parts?
16. If someone touches a child’s private parts:
   a. Did the child do anything wrong? Yes No
   b. Is it the child’s fault? Yes No
   c. Should the child tell? Yes No
   d. Should the child ask for help? Yes No
17. Would it be OK for your doctor to look at your private parts if you were hurt there? Yes No
18. What would you do if you were scared or confused or felt uncomfortable?
19. What would you say if someone asked you to touch their private parts?
20. What should a child do if someone touched his/her private parts and promised not to do it again?
21. If someone touched your private parts:
   a. What would you say?
   b. What would you do?
   c. Who would you tell?