



# **Sorry kids, we've cancelled childhood: Exploring risk, play and the safety creep**

ACIP 2018 Injury Prevention Conference  
June 13, 2018 | St. John's Newfoundland



# Agenda

1. Introduce concept of “safety creep”
2. Look at the language of risk
3. Explore tools for balanced conversations

Students  
hallway  
speed  
is 1 km/h  
please walk.  
MacLeod's  
Landing





## **Safety Creep:**

The notion that increased societal expectations for surplus safety in children's recreation have advanced subtly, gradually, and beyond a point justified by available data.

Noticeable movement in safety creep can be triggered by single events and is, by its nature and application, incompatible with healthy child development.





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Volume 13, 2013 – Issue 3: Outdoor play and learning in early childhood from different cultural perspectives

3899  
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Abstracts

ARTICLE  
**Everyday uncertainties: reframing perceptions of risk in outdoor free play**  
Amita Nelson Nishitani, Amita Bundy, Alex Broom, Paul Tranter, Jo Ragen & Lina Engelen  
Pages 225-237 | Published online 10 Jun 2013  
[Download citation](#) | <https://doi.org/10.1080/14729675.2013.798588>

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**Abstract**  
This paper reports the results of risk reframing, an intervention to offer parents and educators a context for building new and complex perceptions of risk in children's outdoor free play. Our objective was to alter these adults' perceptions of risk to increase the sustainability of an innovative child-centred playground intervention. Qualitative data in the form of audio-recordings of risk reframing sessions, brief participant evaluations and field notes kept by project staff were collected and either transcribed in their entirety or summarised in brief written reports. These data were subjected to constant comparative analysis to identify emergent themes. Results suggest that educators and parents benefit from opportunities to share risk perceptions and discuss the costs and benefits for offering outdoor free play to children to achieve their common goals for children: health, happiness and resilience.  
Keywords: Play, Risk, Reframing, Children, Parents

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“Results suggest that educators and parents benefit from opportunities to share risk perceptions and discuss the costs and benefits for offering outdoor free play to children to achieve their common goals for children: health, happiness and resilience.”



“Experience gained during risk taking can lead to more adaptive decision making over the long term.”





## Traditional definition of Risk:

/risk/

*noun*

a situation involving exposure to danger.

*verb*

expose (someone or something valued) to danger, harm, or loss.

*Synonyms:* endanger, imperil, jeopardize, hazard, gamble, chance;





## **Suggested Definition:**

Risk is a neutral construct that describes the variation between the expected and unexpected outcome in the context of behaviours or decisions.

Risk can be experienced along a spectrum that ranges from positive to negative outcomes, the perception of which is subject to personal interpretation.



## Risk is now neutral

- Risk is separate from the outcome
- Risk describes a variation spread that can be bigger with few controls (less desirable), or smaller with more controls (more desirable):

Risk with fewer controls

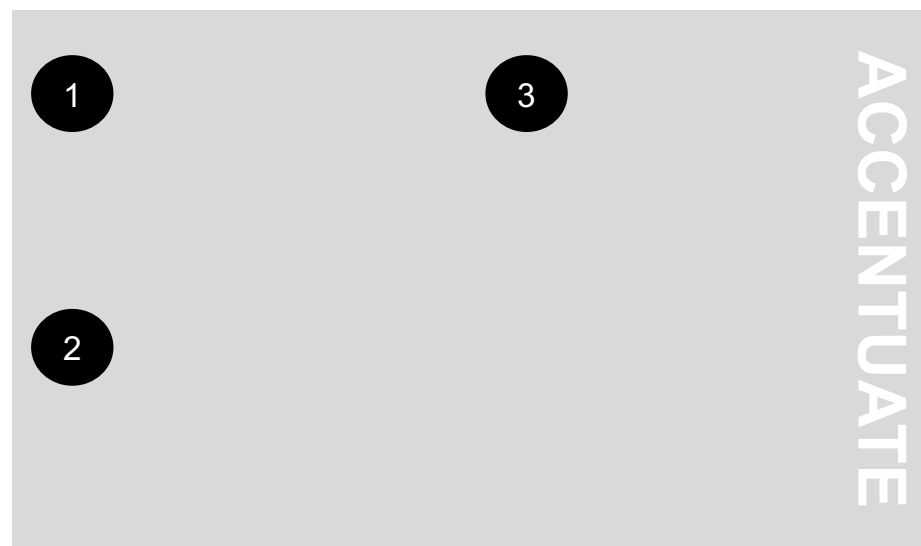
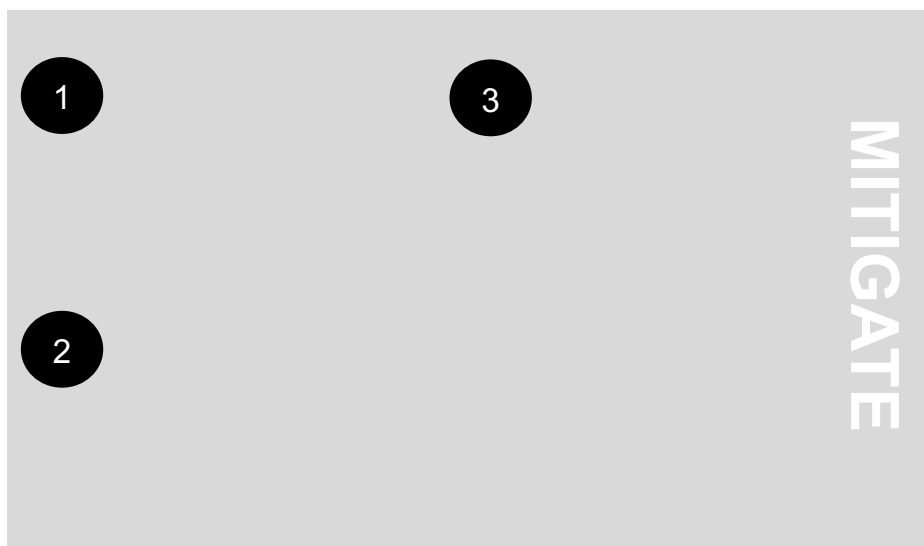
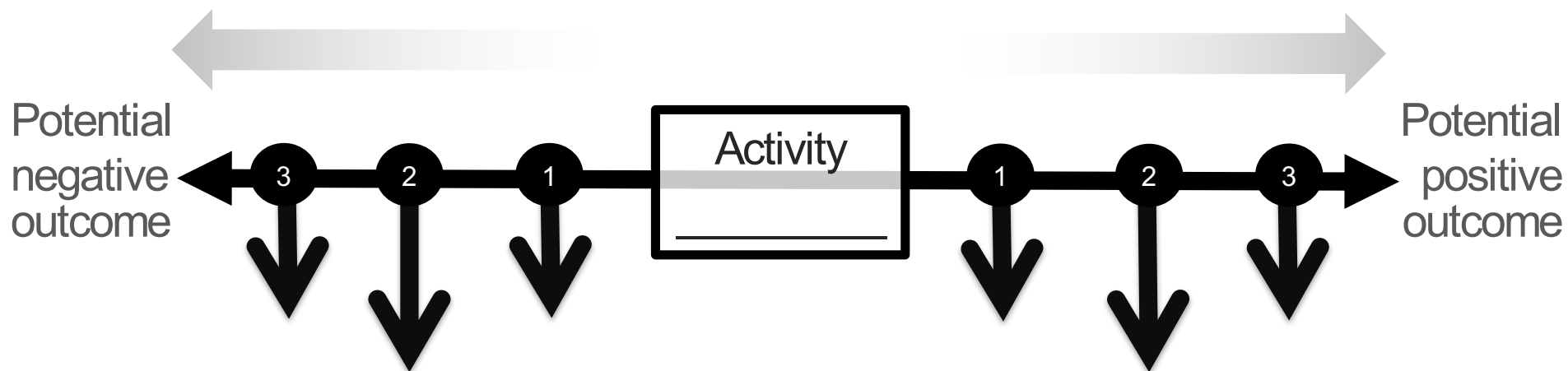
Risk with  
more controls



## Risk is experienced along a spectrum

- The spectrum of outcomes is separate from risk
- Outcomes can be negative or positive





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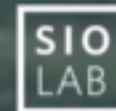
Take a risk, go play outside!

An online tool to help parents and caregivers **gain the confidence**  
to allow their kids to engage in more **outdoor play**.

*Click to watch video!*



**BC INJURY** research and  
prevention unit





### Overview of Risk-Benefit Assessment

Project/ proposal name:			
Type of assessment (tick one box):	Designer	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Provider/manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Post-installation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Assessor:	Name		
	Position		
	Date		
Description and location of facility, feature, activity or equipment			
Date to review risk-benefit assessment:			
Signature of senior worker/manager:			

### Main Form: Risk-benefit assessment

Benefits:	
Risks (taking into account any technical information identified in the supplementary form below):	
Local factors:	
Precedents &/or comparisons:	
Decision:	
Actions taken:	
Ongoing management and monitoring:	

**Source:** Ball, Gill and Spiegel on behalf of the Play Safety Forum, 2014



## Next steps...

1. Identify safety creep by recognizing and challenging the bias.
2. Reframe risk as an essential element of healthy child development.
3. Redefine what injury means in the context injury prevention and through the lens of healthy child development.





# Thank you!

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# Resources:

1. **Risky Play** - Ellen Beate Hansen Sandseter  
Link: <https://ellenbeatehansensandseter.com>
2. **Rethinking Childhood** – Tim Gill  
Link: <https://rethinkingchildhood.com>
3. **Managing risk in play provision: A position statement** - Play Safety Forum, UK  
Link: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/120462/managing-risk-play-safety-forum.pdf>
4. **Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide** - David Ball, Tim Gill and Bernard Spiegel  
Link: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/172644/managing-risk-in-play-provision.pdf>
5. **Risk-Benefit Assessment Form** - David Ball, Tim Gill and Bernard Spiegel  
Link: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/psf-risk-benefit-assessment-form-worked-example.pdf>
6. **Position on Active Outdoor Play**  
Link: [https://www.participaction.com/sites/default/files/downloads/Participaction-PositionStatement-ActiveOutdoorPlay\\_0.pdf](https://www.participaction.com/sites/default/files/downloads/Participaction-PositionStatement-ActiveOutdoorPlay_0.pdf)

# Resources:

7. **What Is the Relationship between Outdoor Time and Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Physical Fitness in Children? A Systematic Review.**

Link:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=What+Is+the+Relationship+between+Outdoor+Time+and+Physical+Activity%2C+Sedentary+Behaviour%2C+and+Physical+Fitness+in+Children%3F+A+Systematic+Review>

8. **Play Safe**, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

Link:

[www.playsafeinitiative.ca](http://www.playsafeinitiative.ca)

9. **Parents' Perceptions of Risk and the Influence on Children's Everyday Activities**

Link: <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=5a79ffc6-11f1-4020-ac7b-ebe564539f3a%40sessionmar4009>