Lesson 1 for Grades 3, 4 & 5

Partnering with Parents & Guardians for Safety
Physical Boundaries: Safe and Unsafe Touching Rules

PRINCIPLE
Children / youth must learn tools to protect themselves from people who want to harm them through physical touch (sexual or otherwise) and to prevent or reduce the risk of sexual abuse and boundary violations.

CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE
Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God.—Catechism of the Catholic Church, **#2319 (1997)**

OBJECTIVES

After lesson 1, children should be able to:

- Know the Touching Safety Rules:
  - Say "No!" when someone tries to touch them in an unsafe or uncomfortable way
  - Try to get away from the situation
  - Tell an adult as soon as possible
- Describe safe / unsafe touches
- Recognize similar boundary rules apply Online
- Understand that if anybody does give them an unsafe touch or shows them inappropriate material, it isn't the child's fault
- Follow a safety plan created in collaboration with their parents

Background for parents and guardians:

Before sitting down with your child(ren) and beginning the activities, read through this entire lesson and view the video. Choose the activities that you are most comfortable with first, gradually moving on to the others. You will find it is helpful to have the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide* handy to navigate the lesson material. The activities listed within this lesson plan are intended to empower young people to think about safety issues with you as their partner.

This age group: Dealing with the primary age—key concept is "energy"

This age group is learning how to function independently of their parents. They know how to read and their comprehension levels are giving them a better sense of abstract ideas. Their writing skills are better as they learn proper grammar / punctuation, and become more refined with communicating their ideas. Children of this age are away from home more often than earlier in life and need to start recognizing that safety issues can arise when they are off with friends, under the supervision of a 3rd party, or at other events / locations. They like to be in constant motion and are always on the go. Groups are important. This is the "gang" age with friends of the same sex. Capable of intense loyalty to others, they usually have a best friend in which to confide. Although truthful about big things, they are less so about the smaller things, often making up alibis or shifting the blame to others. They have a strong sense of right / wrong, fair / unfair and are more able to discern the difference between safe / unsafe. They are able to use logic, can argue and hold strong debates. Caregivers can be more effective when dealing with this age by including them in the discussion while establishing rules or guidelines.

OPTION #1: Introductory Video

Preparation: In preparing for this activity, review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Safe Environment Guide for Caring Adults, Parents and Guardians.*

Directions: View and discuss the introductory video with your child. The introductory video for youth in this age range is designed to open a simple discussion with children about personal boundaries and touching safety. The video is approximately six minutes long and is neither created nor intended as a substitute for the activities. It's merely an intro designed to "break the ice" and assist the transition into completing the interactive Lesson Activity options. It can be used in to introduce any of the following activities. Discussion and practice are the critical components needed to teach children how to protect themselves. They learn best by "doing"; not just listening or watching.

Video links for this age group of Grades 3-5:

English K – 5: https://vimeo.com/1180989990/bba700f579
Spanish K – 5: https://vimeo.com/1181320109/2bc9fbf3c1

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OPTION #2: Safety Terminology

Preparation: In preparing for this activity, review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Safe Environment Guide for Caring Adults, Parents and Guardians.*

Directions: Review and Discuss key vocabulary words with your child. Alternatively, Lesson Leaders may utilize this vocabulary framework to have a better baseline of understanding to simply begin a conversation about boundaries, or to assist you in leading the other activities.

- **Safety rules**—Any time an adult (or other youth) makes a child feel uncomfortable or unsafe, there are simple safety rules so the youth know what to do: the child should say words that mean "No!," try to get away from the person, and tell a safe adult as soon as possible.

- **Private body parts**—those body parts covered by a bathing suit.

- **Saying "No"**—to say "no" means to refuse, deny, reject or express disapproval of. This word is used to express a boundary and communicate that you do not want something to happen or continue. [Let children know it's OK to say "No" to an adult if they make you feel scared or uncomfortable, or if they touch your private body parts.]

- **Rules**—a prescribed guide for conduct or action. We follow the rules to make sure we are safe—just like how we have a seatbelt rule to keep us safe in the car, or the safety rules before we cross the street. [I.e., we teach the child a simple rule for what to do if someone tries to touch him / her in an unsafe way, which is to say "No!", try to get away, and tell an adult as soon as possible.]

- **Uncomfortable**—experiencing discomfort that leaves one feeling uneasy, sometimes causing anxiety or feelings of nausea. [It might be a feeling in the "pit of your stomach" or it could be the hairs standing up on the back of your neck. You may freeze, want to fight or feel like running away from the situation.]

- **Confusing**—is something that is hard to figure out because it doesn't make sense, it is unclear or puzzling. To cause confusion is to cause an inability to think clearly or to be misleading. [An example is a big, messy knot—it can be confusing because it's hard to figure out where each part goes how to straighten it all out.]

- **Boundaries**—the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. There are boundaries you can see (like a fence around a yard) and boundaries you can't see with your eyes (like the comfort zone around us that we call our "personal space"). Boundaries vary depending on the relationship with the other person. [For example, a boundary between a child and a grandparent is different than the boundary between a child and a teacher or coach.]

- **Respecting boundaries (and when they're violated)**—we should have respect for ourselves, and respect for others. Respect for ourselves means we understand our dignity and value as a person, and work to create or maintain boundaries to protect ourselves. We feel upset or uncomfortable when someone doesn't honor our own boundaries, and we communicate with the right person if we need help. Respecting another's boundaries means you care about them, and won't do anything that would bring them harm, and that you communicate with the right person to get them help if they are being harmed by someone else. [Give children examples of respecting others, i.e. not calling people mean names, not hitting others, following rules at school or at home, stopping an activity when someone asks, letting an adult know when someone is in pain or hurt, etc.]

- **Safe friends and safe adults**—safe people won't hurt you without a good reason and won't intentionally confuse you. They listen to and consistently respect boundaries, and follow the rules. [Explain that a child may have many safe friends and adults. Give children examples of adult behavior that could hurt them, but may be necessary for the child's safety, i.e. medical exams, vaccinations, throat swabs, removing splinters, stopping a child from running into the road, etc.]

- **Unsafe friends and unsafe adults**—unsafe friends and unsafe adults put a child at risk for emotional, spiritual and physical harm. These are people who place a child in danger for their own purposes without concern for the welfare of the child. They also do not consistently listen to the parents' wishes or the child's boundaries. [Tell children we can know when someone is unsafe if they do not follow the rules or listen to our boundaries.]

- **Safe touches**—touches that have a good purpose, aren't intended to hurt and should be familiar. They're safe and can also be meant to keep you healthy, even if the person isn't known well, as long as the touches are appropriate for the particular relationship, such as when mom kisses your forehead at night, when you high-five your teammate, etc. [Avoid saying safe touches that *feel* good are "safe, loving or show someone loves you" since sometimes touches are safe and necessary, but can also hurt—although they hurt for a good reason to keep children safe, such as stiches, a doctor shot or dental cleanings.]

- **Unsafe touches**—touches that are inappropriate, could be meant to hurt or scare, or are contrary to the touching rules. If unsure about a touch, ask a parent. [Unsafe touches include hitting, punching, tripping, kicking, spitting, touching private parts, etc.]

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- **Secret**—something kept hidden, never told or unexplained. Secrets exclude others and have potential to harm, sometimes causing the person involved to feel frightened or uncomfortable. [For example, let children know that there are no secrets when it comes to personal and physical safety. Tell children it's wrong for an adult or another child to ask to keep a secret about safety—especially unsafe touches—because that's a way for people to get hurt. If an individual tries to make a child keep a secret or makes him / her feel frightened, the child must know to communicate this information right away to a parent or caring adult—and be reassured that the child will be protected regardless of threats or seeming consequences of "telling".]

OPTION #3: Reviewing the boundary touching rule and boundary violations

Preparation: In preparing for this activity, review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Safe Environment Guide for Caring Adults, Parents and Guardians.* Here children will understand they have a say in what happens to their bodies and a right to be safe.

Directions: Have children write the Boundary Touching Rules. The rules are:

- If someone tries to touch your private body parts, or wants you to touch theirs, you should say words that mean "No!"
- Try to get away as quickly as possible, and
- Tell a safe adult what happened right away—even if (or *especially if*) the person told you not to tell or told you that you would get in trouble for telling.

Discuss ways an adult or another child might try to trap or trick a child. Write these down, too.

- Warning Signs of a person with inappropriate boundaries:
  - Threatens to hurt a loved one, including a family member or pet if the child "tells" someone else.
  - Allows children to do things their parents would not allow (ask children to give examples).
  - Gives gifts without permission or oversight from the child's parents.
  - Asks/tells children to keep secrets from their parents or guardians
- Ask, how do adults or teens try to trick you into believing something that isn't true?

Note: Use this opportunity to talk about the grooming process and to point out that it is unlikely someone would start out by immediately trying to touch your private body parts. Child molesters / boundary violators take some time to gradually move toward increasingly abusive behavior. Remind kids that any time they feel uncomfortable with an adult, they have the right to ask the person to stop what they are doing and to walk away. It is important to talk about this subject in a way that gives the child the information needed but does not scare the child unnecessarily.

OPTION #4: Learning to say "NO!" in an uncomfortable or inappropriate situation

Background: This is a role-playing practice exercise.

Directions: Start with life experience. Take turns sharing times when you have chosen to say "No". Examples can include:

- I yelled "Stop!" when _____.
- I couldn't stop crying when _____.
- I made sure to get away when _____.
- I hated it the day that _____.
- My friend said "No!" when _____.
- My dad said "Stop!" when _____.
- One day in school, I said "No!", because _____.

Note: Role playing with the youth helps them have an arsenal of phrases and reactions they can use—since sometimes they know what they should do but don't necessarily know how to put the words into action. Practice "what-if" scenarios with them, evaluate their answers and gently correct them until they know the protocol.

Discuss the types of touching or boundary violations that make you feel uncomfortable because it violates your personal boundaries. For example:

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- Someone punches, kicks, scratches or pinches you.
- Someone taunts or teases you by saying mean things about you.
- A person you don't feel comfortable with wants to give you a hug.
- Your aunt wants to kiss you on the mouth.
- The babysitter comes to the bathroom and offers to help you towel dry after a shower or bath.
- The coach pats you on the buttocks on your way out of the locker room.

Practice at least five different ways of saying "No!" Create different scenarios, and then have the child practice saying "No!" using different vocal pitches, facial expressions, body language, etc. For example:

- Say, "No! I don't like that, and I don't want to be touched!"
- Yell, "Stop it!" very loudly.
- Say, "Don't do that!" and get away from the person.
- With hands on hips, yell "No!"
- Say, "No!" and get away from the person.

OPTION #5: Technology Safety (Internet Safety—building a strong house)

Background: This is a visual activity in building the strongest house—by drawing a strong, healthy and happy house that can weather any storm. Houses need a foundation, walls, a sturdy roof, a strong door, windows for sunshine, a fence with a gate, nice surroundings, etc.

In this activity, the house is constructed based on answering the questions, but then demolished, the contents of the house become vulnerable.

SUPPLIES

Dry-erase board with markers, or
Paper and pencil, or
Paper and crayons
Eraser capabilities (or extra paper)

You're helping the youth to understand that they must also fortify their own personal boundaries in order to protect themselves and be healthy, much like how together you are fortifying the house.

Directions: Explain the exercise to your child. You will ask your child to "build" a house drawing, which is accomplished by asking a series of questions. To build the strongest house—you will ask a series of True / False questions (see questions below). Each time your child answers the question correctly, the house is fortified by adding a new, essential element to stand strong—and the child is invited to draw that structural element. Conversely, each time your child answers the question incorrectly, you remove a key component of the house, and erase it from view.

You should have a fully fortified house drawing alongside the one being created so your child can see what the end product will hopefully look like when they answer all the questions correctly. For every correct answer, add a key component of the house, such as the walls, roof, door, or the chimney. The goal is to draw a house with a foundation, walls, a roof, a sturdy front door, windows, and a chimney.

Discussing the correct answers is an opportunity to help youth understand proper boundaries while using the Internet. Feel free to reframe the questions for your child.

Process: Below are the T/F Questions to ask for each game, with each round constituting a different part of the house:

Round 1 Q&As:

- T/F: If I see something bad or scary on the Internet, or something that makes me feel uncomfortable, means I should leave the computer and tell an adult.

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  - Answer: The child should both leave the computer, and also go and tell an adult.

- T/F: If I know that someone is being mean to one of my friends on the Internet or through email or a cell phone, then I need to tell an adult right away.
  - Answer: True! Don't try to fix this on your own, involve a safe adult!

- T/F: It's "OK" to post pictures online with identifying information such as my school or pictures of my classmates with sport team colors.
  - Answer: False! It's not "OK" to post pictures with identifying information even if you have security settings on your account.

Note: If the child (or adult) would like to do a Round 2, consider asking the youth to quietly have a powwow and come up with his/her own questions to ask you. Each round should have 6 questions, to match each item in the "House Composition" box needed for a strong house. They'll need to write a question, the correct answer, and a referee (the Lesson Leader). You could have the best two houses out of three rounds and build a neighborhood!

- T/F: It's "OK" to post pictures online with identifying information such as my school or pictures of my classmates with sport team colors IF I have security settings enabled on my account.
  - Answer: False! Even if you have security settings enabled on your account, it doesn't mean that all of your friends have the same types of security settings, which means your info could be vulnerable.

- T/F: If I post something on the Internet, I can always take it down and no one will know. It's not as if it will be there forever.
  - Answer: False! Once posted on the Internet, it will be available for someone to see forever!

- T/F: Using bad language counts as something I should communicate to a caring adult?
  - Answer: True!

[Example of a structurally sound, "strong, healthy and happy" house.]

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