Lesson 1 for Grades 6, 7 & 8

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, youth 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 pre-adolescents and adolescents—key concept is "transition"

The middle school child is experiencing a period of rapid growth. The emergence of interest in the opposite sex is occurring. He / she is often concerned about physical change, body size, skin quality and hair length. Body image is very important to this age as he / she complains of being either too physically mature or immature—and may also complain that they do not have enough privacy. The peer group plays an import role in shaping attitudes and interest. Caregivers need to regularly assure youngsters that changes are normal, though the rate of change varies from person to person. Lesson leaders must carefully listen to children and observe *what is happening in their lives*. Let young people be themselves. Let them explore their self-expression; but, know *who* they are with and *what* they are doing, and remind them of the importance of protecting themselves during this dynamic time in their lives. During this time, children are completely self-absorbed, and many are naturally less communicative than at other periods during their development. This is the point that more trust will be given to the youth to evaluate safe and unsafe situations when they are not in the care of their parents.

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 6-8:
English 6 – 8: https://vimeo.com/1180990140/d8bf069a8f
Spanish 6 – 8: https://vimeo.com/1181320319/573f5e2e11

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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 physical and emotional limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. Boundaries promote and preserve physical or emotional personal space in our relationships. Boundaries give each person a clear sense of "self" and a framework for how to function in relation to others. Boundaries bring order to our lives and empower each of us to determine how others will interact with us.
- **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.]

Note: It is important to invite questions and comments from students at this point. Clarifications of some of the language, such as "harmful touches" might be necessary. Lesson Leaders should be ready to answer clearly and honestly.

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- **Unsafe touch—**harmful touches committed by an individual or group that physically, sexually, or psychologically harms a child or young person. This touch is often from people who either cannot or choose not to see the harm in their actions.[Unsafe touches include hitting, punching, tripping, kicking, spitting, touching private parts, etc.]

- **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".]

- **Peer Pressure**—the strong influence of a group—especially of young people—on members of that group to behave as everyone else does.

ACTIVITY OPTION #3: Teaching Safety Rules (review and expand the boundary touching rules)

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

Directions: **Review the Touching Safety Rules**

- 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.

Talk with children about harmful situations they might face with adults and other young people. Discuss appropriate ways to respond. For example:

- Adults or older children who allow young people to watch R-rated or X-rated movies. (In the first situation, the mere fact that an adult allows a child to watch an R-Rated movie is not necessarily problematic. However, if the movie or the rating is one the parents have forbidden the child to see and the adult tells the child to keep it a secret, the adult's action become more concerning.)
- Adults or other youth who tell dirty jokes or look at "adult" (naked or sexually explicit) pictures.
- An adult or older youth who does something unsafe and, when the young person says, "Stop," the adult or older child agrees to back off but asks the child not to tell anyone what happened.

Note: Discussion allows the young people to work out the issues involved in determining whether the adult's actions are part of the grooming process. It is important that young people begin to recognize the elements of grooming and identify things that are "red flags." As you look at the situations, you will see that none of them are clear-cut examples of grooming. This is an excellent opportunity for young people to begin to confront the challenge of doing the right thing in the face of peer pressure and the child's real need to "fit in" and be part of the group.

Then, discuss the fact that a child has a right to say "No," and to expect the other person to listen and respect the boundary. Discuss difficult situations that could be a part of a grooming process or that encourage the young people to look carefully at challenges that might arise and think through the issues to come to a safe and healthy decision.

- A friend confides in you that someone has molested him / her or has done some things that make the friend uncomfortable with the other person.
- You are at a friend's house. The parents are gone, and your friend wants the two of you to get into the liquor cabinet for some "refreshments."

Stress the importance of the following to the youth: tell an adult you trust to behave safety when something is wrong or when you feel your boundaries have been crossed. If you aren't taken seriously, tell another caring adult, and keep telling until someone pays attention to you.

OPTION #4: Internet Safety Worksheet—Is it true or false?

Directions: Hand out the worksheet and instruct the children to read each statement and select whether the statement is "True" or "False." They can circle or highlight each answer.

Note: The Internet Safety T/F template is included in the downloaded set of materials at the end of this packet.

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After completing the exercise, go through the examples one by one and ask the youth to articulate why they chose the specific answers. Help them to understand the correct answers by looking at the Internet Safety Answer Key below. Explanations are listed for "False" answers on the right of the page.

INTERNET SAFETY ANSWER KEY:

1.	If aware that a friend is being cyberbullied or harassed, or has experienced abuse, it is OK to keep the matter private without telling an adult.	False	Note: If something bad happens to a friend, it is important to communicate that person to a caring adult. It is NEVER ok to keep silent when another friend is in trouble.
2.	You can always know the exact identity of people with whom you meet on the Internet.	False	Note: It is not possible to know the exact identify of people whom you meet on the Internet.
3.	It's OK for an adult or older child to make you promise to keep a secret.	False	Note: It is not OK for an adult or older child to make you promise to keep a secret.
4.	If you see inappropriate images on the Internet, it is important to stop looking and tell a caring adult as soon as possible.	True	
5.	Even if you have great security settings on your accounts, sometimes people can see the material you share because of a lack of security settings on a friend's account.	True	
6.	The best policy is to refrain from posting personal/identifying information on the Internet.	True	
7.	It's OK to say something online, if you wouldn't say it in person.	False	Note: If you wouldn't say or do the action in person, don't say it online.
8.	Once material is shared on the Internet, the information can be easily deleted and removed.	False	Note: Even if you can no longer see the information that was posted on the Internet, it doesn't mean it's been completed removed. Once information is shared, it will always be available for someone to find on the Internet.
9.	If unsure of whether an action is inappropriate, I should just keep quiet and not tell until I know for sure.	False	Note: If an action makes you feel uncomfortable, do not keep silent! Speaking out protects you and others. Even when unsure, communicate your concerns to a caring adult who will protect you.

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Internet Safety Worksheet—Is it true or false?

Instructions: Read each question and circle / highlight (or discuss) the correct response. You'll be evaluating whether each statement is True or False, and discussing the answers at the end.

1. If aware that a friend is being cyberbullied or harassed, or has experienced abuse, it is OK to keep the matter private without telling an adult. True False

2. You can always know the exact identity of people with whom you meet on the Internet. True False

3. It's OK for an adult or older child to make you promise to keep a secret. True False

4. If you see inappropriate images on the Internet, it is important to stop looking and tell a caring adult as soon as possible. True False

5. Even if you have great security settings on your accounts, sometimes people can see the material you share because of a lack of security settings on a friend's account. True False

6. The best policy is to refrain from posting personal/identifying information on the Internet. True False

7. It's OK to say something online, if you wouldn't say it in person. True False

8. Once material is shared on the Internet, the information can be easily deleted and removed. True False

9. If unsure of whether an action is inappropriate, I should just keep quiet and not tell until I know for sure. True False

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