

Lesson 5 for Grades 6-8

Partnering with Parents & Guardians for Safety: *Being a Safe Friend*

PRINCIPLE

Children must know that being a friend means that we “do the right thing” when it comes to healthy friendships with their peers: meaning we recognize unsafe situations, intervene (when possible) and get the information to a safe adult.

OBJECTIVES

After lesson 5, children should be able to:

- Participate in healthy friendships
- Recognize that they can do something to help themselves and their friends when confronted with unsafe situations
- Respond appropriately to unsafe situations involving themselves or their friends:
 - Say “No!” if involved in an unsafe situation
 - Try to leave the situation if they feel uncomfortable
 - Tell a safe adult as soon as possible (even if it happened to a friend)

CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE

“Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one finds a treasure. Faithful friends are beyond price, no amount can balance their worth.” —Sirach 6:14-1

“Do not be a foe instead of a friend.” —Sirach 6:1

Background for Parents and Guardians:

In preparation for teaching this lesson and to lead the activities, review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Safe Environment Guide for Caring Adults, 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 and gradually moving to the others. You will find it is helpful to have the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide* handy to navigate the lesson material. These activities are intended to empower young people to think about safety issues with you as their partner.

Considerations for the age group—

Grades 6-8 Children of this age are dealing with enormous peer pressure while trying to understand their independent role in the world apart from their families. This is the age where puberty may begin or has already. It is not always “cool” to say that you must tell someone if you are touched or approached (in person, or online) in an inappropriate or sexual way. These situations may create feelings of immense shame, guilt, threats, etc., for the youth. Good communication while speaking to this age group should be stressed. With this age group it will be important to stress “healthy” behavior and boundaries, and the “right thing to do” when boundaries are violated.

Activity #1: Introductory Video

Directions: View and discuss the introductory video with your child. The introductory video for all grades 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.

Grades 6-8 Video links:

English 6 – 8: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/P3RoYAYkDQ4>

Spanish 6 – 8: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/XBN8gsD8A7U>

Activity #2: Review and Discuss Vocabulary words in an age-appropriate way with your child

- **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.]
- **Uncomfortable** — Experiencing discomfort that leaves one ill at ease or 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.]
- **Respecting boundaries**—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.]
- **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”.]
- **Surprise**—Surprises are typically happy. They cause feelings of happiness and joy. They are exciting, and temporary—meaning they will be revealed within a specific timeframe. As surprises are usually fun, they include activities like birthday surprises, gifts, trips and special treats. Surprises are inclusive and meant to be shared with others.
- **Problem**—Problems can be big and small; they can be small, little things like puzzles or big things like emergencies—and often need to be solved. They can involve fears and emotions. Sometimes we put boundaries in place to prevent problems, or to be more prepared for them. Whenever we have a problem that we don’t know how to solve, we should talk to a safe adult for help. If we have problems about safety issues, boundaries and secrets, we definitely need to talk to a safe adult. [For example, a house fire is a big problem for everyone who lives there, and for the people who live near that house. It’s a problem because it’s unsafe, and it could hurt people. When a house is on fire, help is needed help right away. How do we get help with the problem of house fires? As soon as it’s safe, we “stop, drop and roll”, try to get out and call 911, and the fire department comes to help us fix the problem of the fire that’s too big to fix on our own.]
- **Threat**—When someone threatens you, they are stating that they are going to hurt, injure, damage or do something dangerous if you don’t do what they want you to do. You never have to listen to threats, but you should be prepared in case you experience them. [For example, someone might threaten you and say if you tell about an unsafe secret, they’re going to hurt your someone/something you know, and that you’re going to get into trouble. When you hear someone threaten you about an unsafe secret, that is when we definitely need to tell a safe adult.]

- **Promise**—When you make a promise, you are declaring that something specific will happen—that you will either “do” or “not do” something. Promises can be good! But, we should never make promises about keeping quiet regarding unsafe secrets.
- **Privacy**—Privacy is primarily about being respectful of a person’s personal boundaries or information. The things we appropriately can keep private include beliefs, opinions, ideas, traits, etc. Maintaining and honoring someone’s privacy does not result in hurting them or others, or compromising someone’s safety. And, complete privacy is not always applicable when it deals with our safety boundaries. When it comes to a situation where boundaries have been violated, someone is hurt or has the potential to be hurt, we should keep the information private insofar as we only tell the people who need to know to help us (and them) stay safe—such as our safe adults or other people who can help us. We also keep other things private, such as our private parts, which we keep private underneath our clothing when we’re in public. Privacy and secrecy are often confused—and the main difference is that unsafe secrecy involves situations where we deliberately keep something from someone else usually out of fear, where keeping the secret can negatively impact or harm ourselves or someone else.
- **Secluded**—Kept apart from social contact with other people. Seclusion is the act of secluding or shutting out. Similar, but different than keeping “isolated,” which is the state of being detached or separated.
- **Rude**—describes behavior where someone inadvertently or accidentally does or says something hurtful. Rudeness is usually unplanned, and not *intended* to hurt. [Examples include social awkwardness, such as burping into someone’s face, cutting someone off, behaving narcissistically, having poor manners, bragging about an accomplishment, etc.]
- **Mean**—describes behavior where someone says or does something hurtful on purpose, once (maybe twice). The aim is to intentionally hurt, and is often motivated by anger. [Examples include putting someone down so the mean person looks/sounds better, making fun of how the person dresses or looks, insulting person’s skills or intelligence or saying / behaving in an unkind way after a disagreement, saying things like: “why would you wear that, it looks terrible on you” or “you’re so dumb, you should quit.”]
- **Bullying**—is different from being rude or mean. It is cruel; the intentional, repeated exposure of negative and aggressive behaviors to a targeted person over time. The bully will say or do something intentionally hurtful, and keep doing it, without a sense of remorse. A key aspect is the ongoing pattern, involving an imbalance of power where the bully has more control or influence. [Examples include physical, verbal and emotional aggression, in-person and online; social exclusion, hazing others, spreading rumors or inappropriate content, cyberbullying, etc.]

ACTIVITY #3: Apply the Continuum: Passive, Aggressive or Assertive?

- Activity:** This activity has two parts, discussion and application. Children are empowered to better protect themselves and help others by learning assertive language skills, with an opportunity to practice with role playing.
- Background:** Teaching children how to be more assertive involves several factors that are important for both you and your child to know, including breaking down commonly-held myths about what “assertive” means, increasing your child’s overall self-confidence, helping them to understand the idea of self-respect and “being a friend to oneself” and to others, and giving them tools and the actual language needed to create and uphold boundaries, as well as avenues and safety networks for when they’re uncomfortable, afraid or in need of help for themselves or others.
- Directions:** Lead and facilitate a dialog with your child about standing up for themselves and others by being assertive.
- Discussion:** **PART 1: DISCUSSION. Say the following:** Sometimes we are in relationships or friendships with others where something isn’t quite right. You might feel taken advantage of, bullied—maybe even abused. Maybe someone else always has their way and you’re the one who has to sacrifice what you want. Do you feel like you always know how to say “no?” It’s important that we know how to stand up for ourselves in really tricky situations and get help for ourselves and our friends when needed. We are going to talk about being *assertive*.
- There’s a lot of confusion regarding being assertive. Sometimes people think that being assertive is rude... Or that it’s being aggressive. The truth is, regardless of whether we are shy or outgoing, or introverted or extroverted, or don’t like conflict or love to argue, we should all be assertive! It’s part of healthy boundaries, and all healthy relationships have healthy boundaries.
- Being assertive doesn’t mean that we have to be loud or annoying. It just means that we identify our feelings, note when something is not right, gather our courage and take the steps to communicate when we feel something unsafe needs attention for ourselves, and for our friends.

Clarify the roles of adults, and safe friends: As we continue this discussion, it's important to recognize it's the job of adults to protect us from unsafe situations. Most people are safe, but there are people who will manipulate us or wish to harm us, and who do hurt us.

Youth can also be a "safe person" for others. This is called being a "safe friend." **As a youth, it's not your JOB (as youth) to protect others. It is not your responsibility, because you are youth.** But, when we do know that someone is hurt or hurting, then we **should try to help** by getting that information to a safe adult. Let's recap these really important points:

- Whose responsibility is it to keep youth safe? (ADULTS; It's the adult's job to protect youth)
- Can we, as youth, also help when we know there's a problem? (Yes, usually youth can help, too)
- How can we, as youth, help the most? (Take the information to a safe adult; a trustworthy person)

Note: Parents should be careful to communicate to youth that they are not responsible for each other. Misinforming youth by saying that one person's welfare is a youth's responsibility could make a child feel more guilt if they weren't able to prevent or stop abuse from occurring for themselves or a friend. The distinction for this lesson is that there are times when youth are being abused, or they know a peer is in need of help, but, they don't always know the best way to assist. Being a safe friend means that children do the "right thing" for themselves, and for each other—meaning that they perform action, or intervene in safe ways when they are aware of a problem.

Tell safe adults when you need help; telling isn't "snitching": Even if we don't realize it, we all have many safe people in our lives who want to help us. However, they don't always know when we need help unless we actually tell them.

Telling a safe adult when we, or others, need help is not "snitching" or "crossing the line." You have a right to be safe! Your friends have a right to be safe. If you know that there's important information about safety, adults should listen to you. If a safe adult isn't listening to you, take the information to another safe adult. Keep taking the information to a trustworthy person, and may a different trustworthy person, until you feel that you've been heard.

Remember: if you, or someone you know, has been abused—it's not your fault. There's nothing that you did to cause the abuse. You are unique, you matter. Being happy and healthy, and having healthy and safe relationships is very important. If you're in a bad or unsafe situation (or know someone who is, it might be time to get some help if you haven't already.

Being assertive is about standing up for yourself. It's about expressing your thoughts, your feelings and your needs. However, keep in mind that when it comes to matters of health and safety, and abuse, it doesn't matter if you are assertive OR aggressive in your response. At the very least, assertiveness is necessary. But, an aggressive response is certainly OK, too.

EXPLAIN AND APPLY THE "ASSERTIVE" CONTINUUM. **Explain:** If you look at the behaviors on this continuum: "assertive" behavior sits in between being "passive" and being "aggressive."

|-----Passive-----Assertive-----Aggressive-----|

Ask the youth to share circumstances where they might respond in each a passive, assertive and aggressive way. Help them understand that they may find themselves in between being specifically passive or assertive, or aggressive.

For each situation listen below, read the options aloud and ask whether the response is passive, aggressive, or assertive. Then, ask what the best course of action is, and, what a safe friend could do to help themselves or a friend. (An alternative option is to write these on a worksheet or project them onto a screen without the answers.)

Situation #1: Your teacher made a mistake averaging your grade.

- a. _____ Say: "My grade is different from what I think it should be. Would you calculate it again?"
- b. _____ Do nothing about the mistake, even if it affects your grade for the entire year.
- c. _____ Say: "Why are you always out to get me? You didn't average my grade right. I'm going to the principal and getting you fired."

Situation #2: The cashier in the cafeteria gives you the wrong change.

- a. _____ Say: "How dare you! You're trying to cheat me!"
- b. _____ Say: "Excuse me, I don't believe you gave me back the right amount of money."

- c. _____ Say nothing about the mistake to avoid conflict.

Situation #3: Your best friend asks you to do something that you think is wrong.

- a. _____ Say: "I don't feel comfortable doing that. I'd rather not."
 b. _____ Say: "Maybe, I'll think about it."
 c. _____ Say: "No way! You are crazy and you're going to get in trouble!"
 d. _____ Say: "I guess it will be all right."

Ask: Are there any special elements to consider? (Yes, depending on the situation, you may need to communicate with a safe adult.)

Situation #4: Your parent's good friend wants to show you images of naked people on his phone and tells you not to say anything to anyone.

- a. _____ Look at what is shown and do nothing.
 b. _____ Say: "NO, this is NOT OK." Try to leave the situation, and go and tell a safe adult.
 c. _____ Grab the phone and throw it, then go and tell a safe adult.

Ask: Are there any special elements to consider? (Yes; truly, even though this is considered to be "aggressive behavior," it may not matter! You have a right to be safe and this person is not treating you with dignity or respect. You can be assertive OR aggressive when it comes to matters of health and safety and standing up for yourself or others.)

Situation #5: Your best friend is being really secretive about talking to the teacher; and you saw some messages between them that made you feel worried. Your best friend made you promise not to tell anyone about what you saw, and you agreed. Now what?

- a. _____ Do nothing; you aren't quite sure anyone will believe you anyway.
 b. _____ Tell a safe adult about your concerns, even though you promised not to.
 c. _____ Go to the teacher and say, "If you do anything to hurt my friend, I'll hurt you."

Ask: Are there any special elements to consider? (Yes, It is not your job to "investigate" whether or not something amiss is occurring. If you can help by communicating concerns, do that!)

ACTIVITY #4: Role Play

Read each of these scenarios aloud and ask a series of questions for each scenario. **First, what should you do with the information presented? What factors make it more challenging to be assertive? Then, what would you say to be a safe friend to yourself (if it were happening to you) or someone else (if it were happening to a friend)?**

Scenario 1: You got a gift from your teacher that was just for you; your teacher said it was "your little secret." You told your friend, who said that you need to tell your parents about the gift. But, your friend is clearly jealous.

Scenario 2: Your best friend has been struggling in a relationship with the most popular person in school. Everybody thinks they are perfect. But, you notice she has been really quiet lately, wears long sleeves, doesn't talk to you, has some bruises, and isn't eating as much anymore. You worry it has something to do with her relationship—but also think it CAN'T be that because he is a super nice guy. Your friend doesn't want to talk about it.

Scenario 3: Your aunt has been spending time with your friend, one on one, without you. Your friend says it's awesome and that your aunt is really cool, and asks you to be on the "lookout." You feel uncomfortable and aren't sure why.

Scenario 4: Your dad's best friend keeps touching you a lot. It's not on your private parts, but it's making you feel uncomfortable. Your family is right there and they don't notice anything weird.

Scenario 5: Your friend tells her parent that an adult at church hurt her and touched her private parts. The person is really important in the community. The parent doesn't believe your friend and says not to exaggerate.

Scenario 6: You are playing a game on the Internet when another gamer starts bullying other players. The gamer threatens to leak private information about others if they don't share videos of themselves online.

Scenario 7: Your friend receives a naked photo of girl at school on his phone. He then texts it to you and says: "pass it on."

Concluding statements: Review the terms passive, aggressive and assertive, and check for understanding— **Ask:** “How many of you are comfortable with being assertive?” “Now, how many of you would be willing to be a safe friend if someone else needed help?”

Remember: if you, or someone you know, has been abused—it’s not your fault. There’s nothing that you did to cause the abuse. You are unique, you matter. Being happy and healthy, and having healthy and safe relationships is very important. If you’re in a bad or unsafe situation (or know someone who is, it might be time to get some help if you haven’t already.

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