

KEEPING GOD’S CHILDREN SAFE LESSON
LEVEL 6

For the Catechist:

Background Information about the Lesson

- Scripture** Do not model your behavior on the contemporary world, but let the renewing of your minds transform you, so that you may discern for yourselves what is the will of God-what is good and acceptable and mature. (Romans 12:2)
- This scripture passage states a believer must know God’s will in order to know what is good, acceptable and mature behavior. One must be transformed from the ways of the world to a life based on the will of God.
- Catechism** God fashioned man with his own hands (that is, the Son and the Holy Spirit) and impressed his own form on the flesh he had fashioned, in such a way that even what was visible might bear the divine form.”
(Catechism of the Catholic Church, #704)
- Guidelines** Human beings, created in God’s image and likeness, are composed of a body united with a soul. The human body, therefore, is sacred and contributes to the dignity of the human person. The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and is to be respected by self and others. God gives the commandments to safeguard life’s sacredness and grow in relationship with Him. Parents, catechists and other trusted adults teach God’s commandments to the children as well as the rules and boundaries for safe touch. Trusted adults are identified as persons who would never intentionally hurt, confuse or scare them; help children to understand their struggles, questions and inexperience; identify ways to keep them safe; and define appropriate boundaries in relationships.
- Age Group** Children in this age group are experiencing many social, physical and emotional changes. Peers play an important role in shaping attitudes and personal interests. They question and/or act contrary to rules and beliefs as they seek independence from their parents. Often they feel awkward, confused and insecure as they have a heightened awareness of their growing and changing bodies. They are discovering a need for privacy and share their most innermost thoughts and secrets with trusted friends. They can become confused in discerning the safe or unsafe nature of secrets. They may equate the revelation of “unsafe” secrets as a break of trust. It is critical, therefore, that these children identify safe friends and trusted adults to counsel them. When presenting this lesson it is important to avoid the term “adult” when talking about people who can do hurtful and inappropriate things to children. Children are abused by adults, older children and their peers. If children are only warned about adults, then they might not report abuse which is committed by a child. The best terms to use throughout this lesson are “anyone” and “someone”. These words help to widen the issue for the child and reflect the reality of the situation.

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Lesson Plan

Objectives

- Recognize the need for rules in everyday life.
- Identify safe friends and trusted adults.
- Become aware of unsafe touches of private parts.
- Discuss responses in unsafe situations.
- Describe situations when secrets are safe and unsafe.
- Understand the importance of trusting their feelings.

Vocabulary

Private parts, touching, safe touch, unsafe touch, trusted adult, safe friend, safe secrets, unsafe secrets, respect, peer pressure, boundaries, abuse

Materials

Vocabulary words on chalk or poster board (page 2)
Loose-leaf or paper for brainstorming task (page 3)
T-Chart on chalk or poster board (page 4)
Copies of Ending Prayer (page 7)

LESSON

Opening Prayer

We praise you, God,
For you have made us wonderfully good and in your image and likeness.
Help us always to honor you and respect ourselves and others. Amen.

Instruction

Having taught the Ten Commandments, remind the children that God gave this moral code to:

- teach us respect for self, God and others
- guide us in forming good relationships with God and others

The review of these faith facts provides a natural transition to the Keeping God's Children Safe Lesson within the Religious Education setting.

Introduce/review vocabulary words.

Instruct the students that a trusted adult is someone who will not intentionally hurt, confuse, or scare them; who respects their wishes and those of their parents, guardians, and caregivers.

Ask the students to name other qualities of a trusted adult.
Write their answers on chalk or poster board.

Emphasize that trusted adults will teach them rules that help to keep them safe.

Activity

“Are Rules Important?”

Supply a blank piece of paper for children.

Ask the children to write down:

- the name of their favorite game.
- two rules about this game.
- reasons why these rules help to play this game
- the consequences if a player ignores these rules.

Get feedback for each question from two or three children.

Ask the children:

- Why are rules important?
- How do rules keep order and keep danger away?
- Why is it hard to follow rules?
- How do rules protect them?

Instruction

Explain that there are rules and laws in life that help to protect everyone. Ask for an example of a rule or law that helps to protect them and others. Ask the children who taught them this rule.

Explain to the children that rules are taught by adults whom they can trust. Ask for descriptions of a trusted adult.

Explain to the students that there are some persons who are not to be trusted. They may purposely try to:

- mislead them or other children about rules
- tell them to ignore rules
- hurt, scare, harm them or other children
- compromise their well being
- touch or harm them in unsafe ways
- touch those parts of their bodies known as private body parts.

In previous lessons, the children learned the private body parts were covered by bathing suits and are covered for health and safety reasons.

Remind the children that they were taught the rules for safety in previous years. Ask the children to recall these rules.

If someone tries to touch your private body parts,

- **NO**--Say, “No!” to that person. Other ways to say “no” are: “Stop that!”, “Leave me alone!” or “Don’t do that!”
- **GO**--you go away if someone makes you feel uncomfortable or tries to touch your private body parts. Move or run away from him/her and try to go to another place.
- **TELL**--a trusted adult if someone tried to touch your private body parts or in an inappropriate way.

Write the words: No, Go, Tell, on the chalk or poster board.

Discuss with the children explanations for appropriate (safe) touches and inappropriate (unsafe) touches.

Appropriate (safe) touches:

- have good purpose to help you
- do not intentionally hurt you (a nurse giving a needle though it may hurt)
- do not disrespect you.

Inappropriate (unsafe) touches:

- may purposely hurt, scare or harm you
- may or may not feel good
- do not respect you
- make you feel uncomfortable and sometimes confused.

Explain the T-Chart activity to the children. They will:

- listen to an example of a bodily touch
- respond if it is an appropriate/safe touch or an inappropriate/unsafe touch

APPROPRIATE (SAFE) TOUCHES	INAPPROPRIATE (UNSAFE) TOUCHES

Read each example below and ask the children to respond, “appropriate” or “inappropriate”.

The catechist writes the example in the corresponding section on the T-Chart.

If the children are not certain, they may also respond, “confusing.”

- Your grandmother or grandfather gives you a good-bye kiss. (Appropriate)
- Your mother gives you a hug when you wake up. (Appropriate)
- A friendly person wants to touch your private body. (Inappropriate)
- Someone older than you grabs you from behind and tickles you. (This can be a confusing touch.)
- The stranger behind you in church wants to shake your hand during the sign of peace. (Appropriate)
- Someone older than you wants to rub your neck to give you a massage. (This can be a confusing touch)
- Your doctor wants to check your temperature during your annual check up.(SAFE)

Add other examples to the chart if time permits.

Explain to the children that some persons may lead children to unsafe or risky behavior. Adults and older children sometimes allow children to break the rules, so that they may appear to be your friend.

Discuss the following with the students as examples of this unsafe or risky behavior or situations.

- An adult or someone older than them allows you to watch R-rated or X-rated movies. How can you avoid this situation?
- An adult or someone older than them tells inappropriate jokes or share X-rated pictures. How can you avoid this situation?
- An adult or someone older than them asks you to show or touch your private parts or asks you to touch their private body parts. How can you avoid this situation?

Ask the students how they would communicate these situations to a trusted adult?

Explain to the children that there are persons who may ask them not to tell about inappropriate touches or behavior. They may tell them that it is their secret.

Acknowledge that keeping secrets can be fun at their age, but they must know the difference between a safe secret and an unsafe secret.

Stress with the children that they should never keep secrets about unsafe or inappropriate situations or touches.

Secrets are safe when they:

- do not compromise one's safety
- are only kept for a short period of time (surprise party, Christmas gift)
- do not make you feel uncomfortable
- do not involve you hurting another

Ask the children to describe other examples of safe secrets.

Secrets are unsafe when they:

- compromise someone's safety
- make someone feel uncomfortable
- hurt someone
- threaten someone

Ask the children to describe other examples of unsafe secrets.

Remind the children that:

- they cannot keep secrets if their or someone's personal and physical safety is compromised
- it is wrong for an adult (or peer) to ask them to keep a secret about unsafe touches to their (the children's) private body parts
- they must tell a trusted adult if the secret confuses them.
The trusted adult can help them.

Conclusion

Review the rules for your safety one more time:

No
Go
Tell

Closing Prayer

Leader: Jesus, when you walked this earth you showed that you loved little children.

Children: Jesus, we know that you love each one of us.

Leader: Jesus, it is hard for us to hear that some people hurt children by their words and actions and do not treat children with love the way you did.

Children: Jesus, we know that you love each one of us.

Leader: Jesus, please help those who hurt others.

Children: Jesus, we know that you love each one of us.

Leader: Jesus, bless our parents, teachers and all those who work to keep us safe.

All: Amen.

Additional Information for Catechist: A preadolescent child is often aware of child molestation. A student may ask a question or raise this issue in discussion. The following information is offered for your knowledge about child molesters. They often:

- are very clever in not immediately abusing children
- “groom” their victims by first befriending them and their family
- are patient and will groom child over a period of time
- establish the child’s trust before sexual/physical abuse
- convince the child that the touches are appropriate as they care for them and would never hurt them
- convince the child that not all rules need to be followed and can be broken
- allow the child to break rules (use of recreational drugs, alcohol, curfew, pornography)

Leader: Jesus, when you walked this earth you showed that you loved little children.

Children: Jesus, we know that you love each one of us.

Leader: Jesus, it is hard for us to hear that some people hurt children by their words and actions and do not treat children with love the way you did.

Children: Jesus, we know that you love each one of us.

Leader: Jesus, please help those who hurt others.

Children: Jesus, we know that you love each one of us.

Leader: Jesus, bless our parents, teachers and all those who work to keep us safe.

All: Amen.

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Leader: Jesus, bless our parents, teachers and all those who work to keep us safe.

All: Amen.