

Lesson 1 for Grades 9 through 12: Touching Safety Rules

Getting started with Lesson 1:

Principle: Young people must guard against those who may harm them through touch (sexual or otherwise).

Catechism: *The human body shares in the dignity of "the image of God": it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit:*

Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity. Through his very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator. For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day. — #364¹

Goal: To assist educators, catechists, youth ministers, and other caring adults in teaching young people how to prevent or reduce the risk of sexual abuse.

Objectives: Through this lesson the catechist, teacher, or youth minister reinforces the parent's message about touching safety and protecting private body parts. Upon completion of this lesson, young people should be better able to:

- Understand the rules about safe and appropriate touches and other boundary issues.
- Keep themselves safe and out of danger.
- Protect themselves from people who might touch them in a way that is uncomfortable or otherwise inappropriate.

Dealing with teenagers—key concept is "searching"

This is the age where all the experiences that began with puberty—the physical changes and the developing emotions—accelerate rapidly as the teenager matures into a young adult. The self-consciousness deepens and matures. The world of "children" is now renounced. Teens believe in their immortality and may tend to be reckless in their behavior. Although it would appear that they reject authority while defining their own independence, in reality they rely on the strength and support they find in parents and other influential adults.

¹ Libreria Editrice Vaticana (1997) *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd Ed.) Washington D.C. United States Catholic Conference.

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Activity #1: Play the (optional) introductory video to begin the lesson:

Note to Teacher: The introductory video for grades 9 through 12 is designed to open a simple discussion with children about touching safety and personal boundaries. The video is approximately seven (7) minutes long and is neither created nor intended as a substitute for the lesson itself. It is merely an introduction designed to “break the ice” among those in this age group and to get everyone talking about the relevant personal boundary and personal safety issues. Importantly, the video will get children focused on the topic matter, which will help the teacher to facilitate an easy transition into the interactive activities within the lesson. These interactive activities are the critical components where children have a real opportunity to learn how to protect themselves.

We recommend that you watch the video in advance at least a couple of times prior to showing it to your students, so you'll be able to more easily anticipate when the video will end. The video really needs no introduction. Just put it into the machine, and hit “play.” If you're using a DVD version of the video, you'll select the English or Spanish version and the appropriate age group from a menu screen. If you're using a VHS version of the video, you'll need to “cue” the tape to the correct version prior to your class time.

Activity #2: Review and discuss the vocabulary words:

- **Boundaries**—the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. Boundaries promote and preserve personal integrity. 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.
- **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.
- **Peer Pressure**—the strong influence of a group—especially of young people—on members of that group to behave as everyone else does.

Activity #3: Review and Expand the Touching Safety Rules

Directions: In preparing for this activity, review *Teaching Touching Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Other Caring Adults*. Discuss with teens the reasons that touching safety rules are important. Make sure you reinforce the following points.

- Knowing the rules helps teens deal with potentially threatening situations and, in the process, helps them maintain their own safety and the safety of their friends.
- Being aware of potentially risky situations, and discussing how to deal with them in advance, are vital to a teen's personal safety.

Teens have a great deal of personal freedom. This freedom also puts them at risk in various ways. Parents and guardians expect teens to take care of themselves and to ask for the help that they need. Discuss with teens the various types of rules that parents or families create to ensure the safety of all family members. State some specific rules regarding what a teen may or may not be allowed to do. This could include:

- Guidelines teens *know* are there because parents and guardians let them engage in certain activities while saying “no” to other activities.
- Behaviors that parents and guardians expect from their teens and young people, even though they (parents) may have never actually verbalized those expectations.

Remind teens that while most touches are good, some are bad and may pose serious risks to those involved. There are a variety of reasons for touching. Discuss some of the reasons for human touch, and note which touches are good and which are bad.

- Touch can be positive, negative, and sometimes confusing.
 - For example, touch can indicate:
 - An attempt to communicate.
 - Affection.

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- Loving and consensual sexual activity between spouses in the context of a Christian marriage.
 - Use of power and control.
 - A demonstration of anger and hostility.
 - A vehicle for victimization—sexually and physically.
- Discuss different examples of positive touches, negative touches, and confusing touches, as well as ways to deal with negative or confusing touches.
 - Discuss ways to say “no” or to otherwise refuse unwanted advances or uncomfortable or unwanted touches.
 - Talk about whether there is ever a time when “no” doesn't mean “no.” And, if there is such a time, discuss some ways to help determine whether “no” really means “no.” **Hint:** If someone says “no” in the context of a human touch, you should always respect “no” as the final answer. Always!

Activity #4: Create a group collage with the theme: “Saying ‘No!’ and Staying Safe”

Directions: Begin creating a group collage that represents the concept of saying “No” and staying safe. Collages provide the opportunity for creative expression to demonstrate the understanding gained in the discussions. Collect the listed supplies, and then follow the process. Be sure to leave room for the addition of other pictures to complete the collage as a part of the next lesson.

Supplies: Old magazines from which to cut pictures
Scissors
Paste or glue
Poster board
Felt tipped markers

Process: Instruct the teens to cut out as many pictures as possible to demonstrate “Saying ‘No!’ and Staying Safe.” Spread pictures out so that the group may view them all individually. Decide which picture best exemplifies the theme. Place this picture in center of the poster as a focal point in the collage. Then, arrange the other pictures around the central picture (pictures may overlap slightly, but none should cover any substantial part of the primary picture).

Discuss the concept of “Saying ‘No!’ and Staying Safe,” while the group is creating the collage. Upon completion, display the poster in the classroom and perhaps in the parish church.

Editor's Note: If you are concerned that Activity #2 will not keep the interest of your students, please consider one of the alternate activities listed below:

Alternate Activity: Create song-skits with the theme: “Saying ‘NO!’ and Staying Safe”

Directions: Invite your students to form small groups of three to five, and each group will create a song-skit that demonstrates the concepts covered in Activity #1. Students may choose a current popular song and reinvent the words to express the message of saying “NO” and staying safe. Or, students may create an original Rap song that presents the same message. They may add dance steps or visual representations of the message to “act out” the words. Students will begin planning their song-skits during this lesson, and will present them to the class during Lesson 2.

Supplies: Unless students need props for the presentation, no supplies are needed other than the boundless creativity of teens.

Process: Divide the teens into groups of three to five students and explain the assignment. Oversee the project in order to assure that the goals of the activity are achieved and that the message is well represented in the finished product. Students will begin planning their song-skits during this lesson, and will present them to the class during Lesson 2.

Note: Your overall number of students will greatly impact the amount of time you can devote to this activity. We recommend that each song-skit be no more than three minutes long.

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Alternate Activity: Create a praise and worship service

Directions: Invite your students to form small groups of three to five, and each group will create a short praise and worship service for the end of Lesson 2—a service that demonstrates the concepts covered in both of the lessons. The service should include prayer, music, scripture, and perhaps liturgical dance. One recommendation is to incorporate the story of St. Maria Goretti into the worship service. Students may add dance steps or visual representations of the message when they complete this assignment during Lesson 2.

Supplies: Supplies needed might include musical instruments or a CD player, candles, and bibles. Other necessary supplies will be determined by the students as they develop their services.

Process: Divide the teens into groups of three to five students and explain the assignment. Oversee the project in order to assure that the goals of the activity are achieved and that the message is well represented in the finished product. The finished product of each group can then be presented to the whole group at the end of the next lesson.

Note: Your overall number of students will greatly impact the amount of time you can devote to this activity. We recommend that each praise and worship service be no more than five minutes long.

Suggested prayer to end the lesson:

Dear God,

Sometimes things happen to me that are confusing or frightening.

When I am confused or feel scared, help me remember what I have learned today.

Help me remember the touching rules so I can protect myself from anyone who might want to hurt me—even if it is someone I like.

Thank you for my parents or loved ones and my teachers who are teaching me how to keep myself safe and healthy.

Remind me that I am special and that you are always with me.

Amen