

Modified Lesson

Alternate Children's Education Models

If the traditional classroom environment is disrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there are alternate options for delivering the children's education.

Learn At- Home Option

The goal of this option is to provide parents with adapted lesson plans along with an attestation they sign and return to you after the lesson is completed at home. It is essential to provide them with the Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide to help them through the lesson material. It will also be vital for you to be personally available to parents who may need support in delivering these lessons, as not all parents are confident/comfortable teaching these topics.

Fortunately, VIRTUS lessons are varied and conducive to individual instruction as well as small group/full classroom environments. The information that follows below represents the core details for Lesson that will accompany the activities for parents.

Lesson

PRINCIPLE

Children / youth must learn tools to protect themselves from people who may harm them through physical touch (sexual or otherwise) to prevent / 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 better able to:

- Know the boundary touching 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. 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 your children to think about safety issues with you as their partner.

Considerations for the age groups—

Grades K-2 Young children have lively and vivid imaginations, are growing less self-centered, and are becoming more conscious of others. Their attention span is short. They build on concrete experiences, love to learn, and are highly inquisitive. They rely on others to define good and bad, and safe versus unsafe behavior—but they do understand "rules". Children need an environment where children are free to ask questions about life and their own bodies.

Grades 3-5 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 getting better as they become more refined with communicating their ideas. Children this age are away from home more often and are recognizing that safety issues can arise when they are off with friends. They like to be in constant motion and are always on the go. Groups are important. Capable of intense loyalty to others, they usually have a best friend in which to confide. 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. Parents and guardians can include them in discussions establishing rules or guidelines.

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.

Grades 9-12 This is the age where all the experiences that began with puberty accelerate rapidly as the teenager matures into a young adult. 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—in person and online. They may appear to reject authority to define their independence, in reality though, they rely on strength and support of parents and other influential adults. Feeling supported and understood is important for this age group, as is upholding boundaries while the reasoning portions of their brains continue to develop. 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. Fortifying online boundaries and guidance with online behavior is needed.

Activity #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 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 K-2 Video links:

English K – 5:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/As5weSqt9Jw>

Spanish K – 5

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/-ELCTmNKsw4>

Grades 3-5 Video links:

English K – 5:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/As5weSqt9Jw>

Spanish K – 5

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/-ELCTmNKsw4>

Grades 6-8 Video links:

English 6 – 8:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/P3RoYAYkDQ4>

Spanish 6 – 8

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/XBN8gsD8A7U>

Grades 9-12 Video links:

English 9 – 12:

https://www.youtube.com/embed/eY_oua646oc

Spanish 9 – 12

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/ScP07b62IR0>

Activity #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.

Terminology: **Boundaries**—The physical and emotional limits that define one person as separate from another or from others are our boundaries. 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.

Boundary Violation—To break someone’s boundaries means to come into their personal space, get too close to them, touch body parts that are private, etc. Sometimes it is just someone leaning on you that makes you feel crowded or uncomfortable.

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

Private body parts—those body parts that are covered by a bathing suit.

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.

Safe touches—touches that have a good purpose, aren’t intended to hurt or harm. They’re safe and can also be meant to keep you healthy, especially when the person isn’t known well. Touches that are appropriate for the particular relationship—such as when mom kisses your forehead at night, when you high-five your teammate, when the doctor examines you, etc.

Saying “No” or similar words—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. Saying, “No” is acceptable.

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.

Touching safety—is about empowering children to resist the advances of child abusers and the lures of people who want to harm children or violate the touching rules/boundaries.

Touching safety rules—Any time an adult tries to touch the child’s private body parts, or tries to get the child to touch the other person’s body parts, the child should say words that mean “No!,” try to get away from the person, and tell a parent or safe adult as soon as possible.

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

Activity #3: Touching Safety Rules

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 repeat 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!”
- 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.

Recommended: Internet Safety with Netsmartz

Now that we are all online more than ever, the internet has become overwhelming for many parents and caregivers navigating unfettered content, interactive platforms, and an ever revolving slew of new apps. We recommend you explore NetSmartz with your student, an online safety education program. It provides age-appropriate videos and activities to help teach children how to be safer online with the goal of helping children to become more aware of potential online risks and empowering them to help prevent victimization by making safer choices on- and offline. Visit: <https://www.netsmartzkids.org/>

Final Step: Verification**IMPORTANT (Parents/Guardians):**

Immediately after completing the lesson with your student at home, please go to the following link and submit the [Electronic Verification Form](#):

https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPage.aspx?origin=OfficeDotCom&lang=en-US#FormId=4gL3YXmtSECPuWK3hwbJgwNwCgk9QUdKt3X_GJVHLjNUN1BFMU44SzlyT01RUjYzVzMwTDdVRIM3Vy4u&Preview=%7B%22PreviousTopView%22%3A%22None%22%7D&TopView=Preview

It is necessary that you complete this final step for compliance. Please submit one form per student.

*** If lesson was led by a catechist in class (either virtually or in person), parents do not need to complete the Electronic Verification Form. Catechist will take attendance and report to their supervisor. ***