

Lesson 4 for Grades 3, 4 and 5

- Preparation:** Educators, catechists, youth ministers, and other caring adults should prepare by reviewing the entire lesson plan and by reading *Teaching Touching Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Other Caring Adults*. Then, follow the instructions to complete as many of the activities as possible in your allotted amount of time.
- Activity #1:** Play the introductory video to begin the lesson.
- Activity #2:** Review the vocabulary words and definitions with your students.
- Activity #3:** Learning when and who to tell—discussion.
- Activity #4:** Learning when and who to tell—scenario.
- Prayer:** A suggested (optional) prayer is provided at the end of the lesson. If you wish, you may use this prayer to conclude this lesson with your students.
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Preparation for completing this lesson:

- Principle:** Empowering children to tell a *safe* adult when something bad, uncomfortable, or confusing happens is an important aspect of child safety.
- Catechism:** As long as a child lives at home with his parents, the child should obey his parents in all that they ask of him when it is for his good or that of the family. “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.” (*Col.* 3:20; cf. *Eph* 6:1) Children should also obey the reasonable direction of their teachers and all to whom their parents have entrusted the child. But if a child is convinced in conscience that it would be morally wrong to obey a particular order, he must not do so. **#2217**
- Goal:** To assist parents, guardians, and other caring adults in teaching children how to know that they have the right to say “no,” to tell a trusted adult when they feel uncomfortable, and to help them recognize who to trust when they need to communicate their concerns.
- Objectives:** Upon completion of this lesson, children should be better able to:
- Identify the *safe adults* in the child’s environment who can be trusted.
 - Know some of the reasons why these people are considered trustworthy.
 - Know that they should tell a trusted adult if anyone touches them inappropriately or makes them feel uncomfortable or confused.

Dealing with this age group—the key concept is “energy”¹

These children are now away from home more often than ever before and must begin to recognize that safety issues can arise when they are out with friends or away at activities and events. They like to be in constant motion and always on the go. Groups are important. This is the “gang” age with friends of the same sex. Team sports flourish during this time.

Capable of intense loyalty to others, children of this age usually have a “best friend” to confide in. They can talk through problems and can think through their past actions to find a justification for their behavior. For example, they will have explanations and justifications for being late, not completing homework, being on the phone after lights out, etc. They will also take time to search for the information they need to resolve their own questions. They are capable of developing plans and setting their own goals.

Often using tactics such as making up alibis or shifting the blame to others, this age is less concerned about small issues—although usually truthful about significant issues. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and justice. They can argue and hold strong

¹ DeBord, K. (1996). “*Childhood Years: Ages six through twelve.*” Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service.

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debates. Caregivers may find they are more effective when dealing with this age by including them in the discussion while establishing rules and guidelines.

The best approach to working with this age group is through non-competitive games in which the children can establish individual goals. At this age, more explanation is necessary when rules are given. Children need to begin to learn to trust their own ability to make decisions. Therefore, criticism should be designed to teach. For example, when something goes wrong or does not turn out as planned, rather than tell the child what went wrong, ask, "Next time, how could you do that differently so you would have a better outcome?" Let the child begin to think through the process and develop possible solutions.

Special preparation exercise for teachers

During the week prior to teaching this lesson, notice the varying levels of trust that you have for the people in your life. Look to see who you trust with your deepest feelings and fears and why you trust that particular person or those particular people. Notice when you are reluctant to share personal information with certain people and stop to think about why you consider that person to be untrustworthy. Use the week to begin to discern how *you* know who to trust and to what extent. Examine how it is that you know when to speak up, because the issue is important enough to warrant the effort, and when to simply let something go, because it's an issue that's not important enough to pursue. This thought process will help you be better prepared for your interactive discussion with your students during the activities portion of this lesson plan.

Activity #1: Play the introductory video to begin the lesson:

Note to Teacher: The introductory video for grades K through 5 is designed to open a simple discussion with children about touching safety and personal boundaries. The video is approximately five (5) 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 and definitions:

Trust—To place confidence in or depend on.²

Safe adults and friends—People who won't hurt, confuse, or scare a young person intentionally or without a good or honorable reason.³ Safe friends and adults also respect young people's wishes and the rules of their parents and guardians.ⁱ

Activity #3: Learning when and who to tell—discussion:

Directions: Remind your students that these lessons are designed to give them the tools to protect themselves when difficult or even dangerous situations arise. Tell them that in today's lesson we will be talking about *when* to disclose a dangerous event or situation and *who* to tell when something bad, uncomfortable, scary, or confusing happens to you. Remind them that knowing what to do when someone intrudes upon their boundaries or violates the touching rules can mean the difference between staying safe and getting hurt.

One of the essential elements your students must learn is the touching rule that states: you must tell a trusted adult if someone violates the touching safety rules.

Sometimes reporting this type of inappropriate behavior is the hardest part. Ask your students why disclosing this sort of behavior is so difficult. Listen for the following reasons:

- I don't want to get anyone in trouble.

² The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition © 2000, Houghton Mifflin Company.

³ *Teaching Touching Safety Guide for Parents and Guardians*, National Catholic Services, © 2004.

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- I think I can deal with it myself.
- I don't want to upset my parents and teachers.
- I'm not sure *exactly* what happened.
- The person asked me not to tell and I don't want to be the one to say anything.

After students have given a number of reasons, continue the discussion by making the following points:

- Telling a safe adult about someone's inappropriate behavior does not get the person into trouble. The person's own inappropriate behavior is what gets them into trouble.
- Even if you can deal with the way the situation affected you, telling a safe adult means that the violator has to deal with his or her own inappropriate behavior. And, perhaps, by revealing an incident, you'll be helping to protect someone else from harm.
- The people who love you will always be upset when bad things happen. It is not your job to protect the adults in your life from being upset. They're not upset at you. They're upset because they love you and someone did something to you.
- Even if you don't know for sure what happened, it is important to tell an adult you trust.

Activity #4: Learning when and who to tell—scenario:

Directions: Begin to tell your students a story about a new teacher and a 10-year-old student.

Scenario Part 1: "There's a new science teacher this year and he's really a cool guy. He dresses more like a student than a teacher, and he rides a motorcycle to school every day. His name is Mr. Wilson and he makes science a lot more interesting and fun by doing some great experiments in class. Even my friend Casey likes science now. She's 10. But I think the motorcycle is what she really likes. Mr. Wilson really likes Casey, too. Yesterday, Casey told me that Mr. Wilson offered to give her a ride on his *bike* sometime."

Ask the students—*What should Casey do?* (Discuss what, if anything, about Mr. Wilson's behavior is of concern.)

Scenario Part 2: "Tuesday Casey's mom couldn't pick her up after school, and she needed a ride home. I guess she thought this was her chance to ride on Mr. Wilson's motorcycle. After school, Casey waited for him in the parking lot and asked if he really meant it about riding on the motorcycle. Mr. Wilson patted her on the shoulder and said, "Sure, why not? Hop on."

Ask the students—*Should Casey ride the motorcycle?* (Discuss why she should or shouldn't ride with him. Is there anything about Mr. Wilson's behavior that should cause Casey to be concerned?)

Scenario Part 3: "Mr. Wilson put on his own helmet and gave Casey a helmet to wear. Before he took off, he grabbed Casey's hands, pulled them around his waist, and told her to hold on tight. Then he squeezed the top of her leg and started the engine."

Ask the students—*What should Casey do?* (Discuss what, if anything, about Mr. Wilson's behavior is of concern.)

Scenario Part 4: "On the ride home, Mr. Wilson reached back and ran his hands up Casey's leg. The bike was going really fast, and Casey was holding on to keep from falling. What could she do? She couldn't let go and push his hands away. He took the long way to Casey's house and when they got there, he grabbed her under the arms and helped her off the motorcycle—and his hands "accidentally" touched her chest. By this time, Casey was really upset. She brushed Mr. Wilson's hands off her, grabbed her books and ran to her house. He grabbed her arm, apologized and smiled, and told Casey that he would see her at school. Before he left, he reminded her that the whole ride home should probably be their little secret. After all, some people might not understand. And, after all, riding on the bike with him was "her idea."

Ask the students—*What should Casey do?* (Discuss what, if anything, about Mr. Wilson's behavior is of concern.)

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Ask the students to look back and see what Casey could have done differently in this situation. When was the first time that Mr. Wilson's behavior was inappropriate?

Reaffirm to your students the importance of Casey telling a trusted adult what happened. Address their concerns about speaking up by using the points made earlier in the discussion.

The next question for the students is *who do you tell?*

Ask your students to name some of the adults in their lives who they trust. Next, have them consider the following points to help them figure out who to tell when something like this happens. They should consider telling:

- People who have proven themselves trustworthy in the past.
- People respected and trusted to behave honorably by your family.
- People who listen to you and treat you with respect.
- People who respect your wishes and your parent's rules.
- People who you know have your best interests at heart.

The best choice would be to tell someone who matches all of these points.

It is important for students to begin to confront the challenge of speaking up when something like this happens—regardless of how threatened or uncomfortable they feel. In situations like this, the adult will work very hard to make the victim believe that he or she is responsible and that nobody will believe the child if he or she speaks up.

Note to Teacher: Many children believe that when it is their word against that of a teacher or another adult, the adult will always be believed. It is extremely important that you help dispel this myth and help foster an environment where children feel empowered to report this sort of behavior when it first occurs.

Suggested (optional) prayer to end the lesson:

Note to Teacher: This prayer is a variation of an old Catholic traveler's prayer to be said before beginning a journey. It is repeated from Lesson 3 in hopes that some children will begin to memorize it (if they haven't already done so). Remind your students that, as they grow up, they are on a journey through life. Each time they leave their home and go out on their own or with peers, they are traveling. Prayer can help prepare them for the journey and guide them along the way.

My holy Angel Guardian,
 Ask the Lord to bless the journey that I undertake,
 That it may benefit the health of my soul and body;
 That I may reach its end,
 And that, returning safe and sound,
 I may find my family in good health.
 Guard, guide, and preserve us throughout the day and night.

Amen.

References:

Liberia Editrice Vaticana (1997). *Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed.)*. Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference.

United States Catholic Conference (1990) *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*. Washington, DC: Office for Publishing and Promotion Services.

ⁱ *Teaching Touching Safety*, © 2004 National Catholic Services, LLC. Page 5.