

Lesson 6 for Grades 6-8

Partnering with Parents & Guardians for Safety:
Boundaries: Feelings and Facts

PRINCIPLE

Children should be taught tools to recognize what it feels like when adults or other children do not uphold healthy boundaries. Children need to understand objective and subjective signs of boundary infringement, how it physically and emotionally might feel and what to do about it.

OBJECTIVES

After Lesson 6, children should be better able to:

- Distinguish the difference between objective situations where boundaries are violated or infringed upon and healthy relationships.
- Recognize the range of sensations beginning with feeling happy/content, to “uncomfortable” to potentially feeling unsafe or violated (physically and emotionally).
- Respond appropriately to unsafe situations involving themselves or their friends.

CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

—Deuteronomy 31:6

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.

This age group: Dealing with pre-adolescents and adolescents—key concept is “transition”

The middle school child is experiencing a period of rapid growth. The emergence of interest in the opposite sex is occurring. He / she is often concerned about physical change, body size, skin quality and hair length. Body image is very important to this age as he / she complains of being either too physically mature or immature—and may also complain that they do not have enough privacy. The peer group plays an important role in shaping attitudes and interest. Caregivers need to regularly assure youngsters that changes are normal, though the rate of change varies from person to person. Lesson leaders must carefully listen to children and observe what is happening in their lives. Let young people be themselves. Let them explore their self-expression; but, know who they are with and what they are doing, and remind them of the importance of protecting themselves during this dynamic time in their lives. During this time, children are completely self-absorbed, and many are naturally less communicative than at other periods during their development. This is the point that more trust will be given to the youth to evaluate safe and unsafe situations when they are not in the care of their parents.

Prior to Teaching the Lessons—A Map for Parents

1. **Complete the VIRTUS Children's Programs Lesson Leader Orientation and Certification Training.** This training module will provide the foundational knowledge necessary for any Lesson Leader to successfully lead a safe environment lesson. For access to this training, please communicate with your diocesan coordinator.
2. **Review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Safe Environment Guide for Caring Adults, Parents and Guardians*.** This document (also available in module format) gives a wealth of information regarding boundaries. While adults are the main protectors of children, there are skills children can learn to better protect themselves and each other when faced

with tough situations where caring adults aren't present. For access to this resource, please communicate with your diocesan coordinator.

3. **Review the Key Vocabulary Words for Parents to Know** (below). These key words and concepts should be woven throughout the entire lesson. The lesson leader should read through and understand these terms and apply them to each activity.

Key Vocabulary Words for Parents to Know

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. [For example, teach the child a simple rule for what to do if someone tries to touch him / her in an unsafe way, which is to say “No!”, try to get away, and tell an adult as soon as possible.]

Limits—the point or edge beyond which something cannot go. The furthest edge of something.

Rights—We are all born free and equal, and have certain rights that are automatically ours. Everyone is entitled to these rights, and they should not be taken away from us. For example, teach children, “you have a right to be safe, and your body belongs to you!”

Boundaries—the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. There are boundaries you can see (like a fence around a yard) and boundaries you can't see with your eyes (like the comfort zone around us that we call our “personal space”). Boundaries vary depending on the relationship with the other person. For example, a boundary between a child and a grandparent is different than the boundary between a child and a teacher or coach.

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.]

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 that it's wrong for an adult or another child to ask a child 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”.]

Feelings—Your emotional state, such as being happy, sad, excited or nervous. Your feelings help you understand what you like and what you don't like. Feelings can also help you determine whether you like what is happening to you (such as feeling happy when playing with a friend) or you do not like what is happening to you (such as getting upset if you drop an ice cream cone on the ground, or having your stomach feel yucky if someone touches you in an unsafe way).

Discomfort—To feel uneasy, anxious, or embarrassed (such as when your face starts to feel hot and get red because you tripped on the playground in front of your friends).

Uncomfortable—Experiencing discomfort that leaves one feeling 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.]

Feeling safe—When you are with a safe adult or safe friend (someone who listens to you, consistently respects your boundaries, and follows the rules) and you feel happy and cared for. You feel comfortable and calm.

Feeling unsafe (not right)—To feel scared, nervous, anxious or uneasy. You might be worried that something bad is going to happen. Your body might start to sweat, or your stomach might feel sick and you know that something is not right. [This could happen if an unsafe adult or unsafe friend puts you in danger for their own purposes, or doesn't follow the rules or respect your boundaries.]

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.]

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.]

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.]

DURING THE LESSON

Each lesson should begin with the Introductory Video. Following the video, you are able to choose which activity options you would like to do with your child. There are multiple activities to choose from, and you may choose to do one, or all, of the activities. Each activity can also be tailored to the needs and grade level of your child.

STEP 1: Play Introductory Video

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 OPTION #1: Feelings and Boundaries

Background: This activity will provide opportunities for discussion on what it feels like [physically, emotionally and psychologically] when a child is in an unsafe situation, and actions they can take to be safer.

Begin the activity with a discussion regarding feelings and how your body responds to feelings.

First, identify that feelings are normal—they're neither good, nor bad, and everyone has them. Having feelings is a healthy part of being a person.

Ask your child, "what does your body *feel* like when it is... Happy? Joyful? Excited? Content? Calm?" Give examples of events that would cause someone to typically feel excited or happy, such as: a birthday party, attending a large event, Christmas, going to a friend's house, riding a bike, hearing a favorite song, playing a sport, etc.

Then, explain that sometimes, things might happen to us that might cause us to feel ways that our bodies don't like as much. We might feel uncomfortable, or "yucky" inside our stomach, or even feel sick to our stomachs. Sometimes our bodies might react in a way we don't expect—so that's why we are learning about them now, to help us recognize when our bodies might not feel the best.

The feelings we have in our body are telling our brain something—whether it is for something happy or for something wrong, uncomfortable or unsafe. **Feeling uncomfortable or unsafe might feel like the following:**

- Your body might feel like fighting—wanting to strike out or hit
- Your body might want to take flight—wanting to run away or get away
- Your body might freeze—feeling like you can't move, like your body feels like concrete
- You might feel afraid
- You might have clammy or sweaty hands
- Your body might shake all over
- You might feel very cold or "shivery"
- Your heart might race or start beating/thumping really fast
- Your body might feel heavy or stuck
- Your tummy might feel sick, like you want to throw up
- You want to scream or yell, etc.
- You might cry

- You might feel sad
- You might feel lonely
- You might want to squeeze your eyes shut and try to pretend that you are somewhere else
- You might want to daydream about a better place
- You might feel dizzy
- You might feel confusion—not knowing what to do, or understanding what is happening
- And, you might feel disconnected, like you're watching something happen to you—and maybe not even feeling it physically

Highlight the following facts to children:

1. If someone makes you feel any of these [physical, emotional or psychological] feelings, your body is telling you that something is the matter, that something is wrong.
2. If you ever feel this way, it is not your fault! Remember, feelings aren't wrong, but if you feel unsafe, worried, uncomfortable, etc., then it's your body is giving you a response that needs attention!
3. If you ever feel this way, it's important to try and say "no!" to the person, and to do whatever you need to do to get away as soon as possible.
Then, you'll need to go to a safe adult for help. Can anyone tell us the names of their safe adults? What makes them safe? (For information on safe adults, refer to the *Key Vocabulary Words for Parents to Know*)

Activity:

Discuss the scenarios with your child and ask what they could do if that situation happened to them.

You may need to guide their responses in some of the scenarios. When the question of "what might your body be telling you" is asked, the children should be led to say that their bodies are showing them that they feel discomfort, uncomfortable, unsafe, as if their boundaries are being impacted, etc. And, when their bodies feel that way, they have to do something healthy to address it!

Scenarios:

1. At an outdoor event, an older teen starts rubbing your shoulders and this makes you embarrassed so your face starts to feel hot and gets red and your heart starts beating faster because you are uncomfortable. What might your body be telling you? What can you do?
 - a. Say "NO! I don't like it when you do that."
 - b. Shrug your shoulders and move away so they stop.
 - c. Leave and go somewhere else.
 - d. Tell a teacher or another safe adult.
 - e. Call your parents to come and pick you up.
2. A friend of your parents tells your mom that they can stay with you overnight so your mom can go on a work trip, but when you're around that person you start to sweat and your hands feel clammy because you don't like how they touch you or the things they say to you. What might your body be telling you? What can you do?
 - a. Tell your mom that you do not feel comfortable being alone with this person.
 - b. Tell another safe adult.
 - c. Let your mom or the other safe adult know exactly why you do not want this person to stay with you.
 - d. Ask if you can stay the night at a different friend's house instead. (This is an option knowing that the other elements still do need to be discussed.)
3. At school, another student touches you in a way that makes you feel confused and makes your stomach feel sick like you are going to throw up. What might your body be telling you? What can you do?
 - a. Tell the other student "No! Don't touch me like that again."
 - b. Tell your teacher or another safe adult at school.
 - c. Tell your mom or dad when you get home from school.
 - d. Stay away from that other student at school.
4. A neighbor comes over to your house and tries to grab you and pull you into a big bear hug, which you don't like. It makes your whole body freeze, even though you want to get away, but your whole body feels heavy and it's hard to move. What might your body be telling you? What can you do?
 - a. Use your arms to push them away.
 - b. Duck out from under their arms so they can't grab hold of you.
 - c. Tell them "I don't like that—don't hug me that way."
 - d. Tell a safe adult.
5. An adult gives you fifty bucks to spend any way you want, and you think this must be too good to be true. Then they ask you to keep it a secret. What can you do?
 - a. Tell a safe adult.
 - b. Tell them "No! I don't keep secrets from my mom or dad."

- c. Tell a safe adult you don't want to spend time with that person anymore.
6. A friend tells you she doesn't like her mom's new boyfriend because her hands start to feel clammy and her knees start to shake whenever she is around him. Because of this, your friend, lied to her mom so she could spend more time at school. She's afraid to tell her mom because she doesn't want to get in trouble for lying and she doesn't want you to tell anyone else. What should you do?
 - a. Tell your teacher or another safe adult at school.
 - b. Tell your friend we can't keep secrets when it comes to our safety.
 - c. Encourage your friend to also tell her mom.
 - d. Tell your mom or dad when you get home from school.
 - e. Tell your friend that you will go with her to talk to someone safe.
 - f. Tell your own safe adult, even if your friend doesn't want you to.
 7. (Online component) While you were playing your favorite game or app online, someone sent you a picture of a person without any clothes on that makes you feel confused. You know that you aren't supposed to see these types of images. Your heart might start to beat harder, and you want to close your eyes and not look at it, and not say anything to anyone because you might get into trouble. Then they ask you to send them a picture of you without any clothes on. What can you do?
 - a. Take a deep breath and remember that you have safe adults who want to keep you safe, and tell a safe adult right away.
 - b. Stop playing the game or app until you can tell a safe adult—leave the content there while you go find them.
 - c. Talk to a safe adult about how that made you feel, because your feelings are important.
 - d. Do not respond to the person who makes you feel unsafe, and tell a safe adult.

Discussion: Ask children the following questions, listen to their responses, gently correct if necessary, and discuss the responses below (that are shown under each question). Sometimes more than one action will be required:

- How do you feel when someone (either an adult or another teen) touches you in a way you don't like or is unsafe?
 - Pay attention to your body and feelings.
 - Your stomach might feel sick or funny inside.
 - You might start to sweat and feel cold at the same time.
 - Your hands might feel clammy.
 - You might feel sad or confused.
- What can you do if you are in a situation where another adult or teen is touching you in an unsafe way?
 - Say "No! Stop that."
 - Try to leave the situation if possible.
 - Tell a safe adult as soon as possible.
 - Talk to a safe adult about how it made you feel.
- What about if something feels good, but you know it's not safe or okay—such as an adult or teen touching your private parts—what should you do?
 - Say "No!" because it's an unsafe touch.
 - Try to leave and get away if possible.
 - Tell a safe adult as soon as possible.
 - Talk to a safe adult about how it made you feel.

ACTIVITY OPTION #2: Survivor Diaries

Background: This short video is shared with permission from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and can be played for youth. It is designed to open a simple discussion with children about taking to people online.

Preparation: Internet access and video playing are parts of this activity and should be queued up in advance. It's also possible to download the videos from the NETSMARTZ website.

Description: In, "Real-Life Stories – Survivor Diaries," hear stories from two teens who started talking to someone online who later hurt them. Click here for the video link and then look through the videos under Middle and High School to find "Survivor Diaries." <https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/videos#middleandhighschool>

Discussion: Before showing the video, ask, "How would you feel if you started talking to someone online, but they

weren't who you thought they were?"

Say: "Sometimes these things can happen when we are online, when talking to others, playing games, or looking at websites. If it does happen, there's a really important safety plan that we need to know about—and we're going to talk about it after watching this video."

After the video, ask, "How do you think it would have felt, physically and emotionally, after they found out that the people they were talking to online weren't who they thought? What should they do?"

Let's also discuss what we should do when we feel upset, confused, scared, upset, or angry about something that we see online, or regarding something unkind or mean that someone says or writes to us when online, while playing a game or just simply watching videos. Here are the options we can do when something upsets us online:

- Block the person

- Report any cyberbullying to the website or app.
- You can also save the message or visual, and show it to a safe adult.
- Always bring safe adults into the conversation when you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, or when you know something isn't right—there are lots of safe adults in your life.