

## Protecting God's Children: Lessons for Students

St. Gabriel's Church - Elma, New York

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Ages 5-7

**Objective:** To help children distinguish the difference between good and bad (appropriate or inappropriate) touch. To affirm a child's right to say no to an adult who makes them feel uncomfortable.

### Opening Prayer:

Use a short prayer or song with gestures that speaks of God's love for all God's creation, especially children.

For example Psalm 104:24: "O Lord, how wonderful are all your works. In Your wisdom, you have made them all, the Earth is full of Your creatures;" Sing: "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"

### Presentation and Process: *Kinds of Touch and a Child's Right to Privacy* (10 minutes)

- Begin by saying "God loves us so much. God created us to be happy. He gave us our bodies. What are some happy things we do with our bodies?" (run, jump, sing, laugh, smell flowers, pet puppies, hug our parents, play, see new faces...)
- Touching is something we do with our hands. We give and receive touches. What are some good kinds of touches? Good touches make us happy and comfortable.
- What about bad kinds of touches that make us feel sad, confused or uncomfortable? Can you name some of those? (When someone forces you to kiss or touch them, when someone tickles you too much even when you have said "stop," when someone touches you in the private areas of your body.)
- Review the private areas of our bodies by describing them as those covered by a bathing suit. It is always advisable to use proper names for body parts if necessary; but you should not need to teach the children what all these parts are. Point out that no one should ever touch those private parts of our bodies. There are exceptions, like when the doctor has to examine us when there is something wrong, or when we need to ask our parents to help us with something. We should try to take care of our own bodies as best we can by ourselves.

### Presentation: *Learning the Skills to Avoid Bad Touching* (10 minutes)

- Your bodies belong to YOU. Whenever a person bothers you with a bad, "not OK" touch, you can say "NO." Even if it is an adult or someone who is bigger than you, or someone you even love and know well. Let's hear you all say "NO" in a big loud voice. (Have children all say "NO" together.)
- Now ask the children to stand up and this time, say "NO" with their voices and their bodies. Show them how to move back and hold up their hand in a stop motion. (Now have all children say "NO" with a hand up and move back.)
- "After we say "NO" in a big, loud voice and hand motion, what do you think you should do then?" Answer: Go tell an adult you trust.
- Who are some people you can trust? Name them (parents, catechist, teacher, principal, pastor, nurse, police officer, doctor, etc.).
- Sometimes a bad touch is scary and you might feel scared to tell someone, but it is important to do that. Remember you can't get into trouble when you tell someone the truth about a bad touch. When someone touches you that way, it is NEVER your fault. Adults are supposed to keep you safe and need to know when someone made you feel unsafe.

As an alternative you might want children to practice saying "NO" in the following scenarios:

- Your older brother tickles you so hard, he makes you cry. He thinks it is fun, but you don't.
- Your grandpa holds you on his lap and squeezes you so tight that you feel uncomfortable, and doesn't let you down when you try to get down.
- Your mom's friend helped you get a wet bathing suit off, and stopped to feel the private parts of your body. It made you feel scared and uncomfortable.

**Closing: (5 minutes)** End with a prayer about God's love and protection of us, and make the sign of the cross in blessing on each child's forehead, "May God bless you and always keep you safe, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

## **Ages 8-10**

**Objective:** To help children recognize the lures used by those who sexually victimize children. To give children strategies for keeping from being tricked into uncomfortable and dangerous situation.

**Opening Prayer:** Use an appropriate scripture reading, psalm or prayer that speaks of God's care for us, or God's protection of us, for example: Psalm 23 or an adaptation of "The Lord is My Shepherd."

### **Presentation and Process: *Identifying Safe People in Our Lives* (10 minutes)**

- Begin by asking the children, "Who are the adults that make you feel safe?" (Try not to get generic categories, like "teacher," "parents," etc. Instead encourage them to name folks-Mom, Mrs. Brown, etc.) Continue by asking, "What do they do to make you feel safe?"
- After they process the first two questions, tell children that most adults want us to be safe and try to protect us, but sometimes there are people that do not make us feel safe and protected, and make us feel uncomfortable. "What are some things people say or do to make us uncomfortable?"
- You may get a variety of responses, but zero in on or prompt responses around unwelcome affection (over-tickling, forced kissing), uncomfortable touches, verbal control, being alone with someone, being tricked into doing something you don't want to do.

### **Presentation and Process: *Identifying Lures* (20-25 minutes)**

- Today we are going to learn to recognize people who cannot be trusted to keep you safe or try to trick you into situations that make you uncomfortable. Ask, "Are these persons always strangers?" Affirm that often these "tricky" people are known to you and try to get you to like or trust them first. The ways they do this are called "lures." Do you know what some lures are? (see **Appendix** – using the age appropriate lures/tricks as examples.)
- Present common lures used by sexual predators (see **Appendix**).

### **Presentation and Process: *Responding to Lures* (15 minutes)**

- A. What do you think you would do if someone used one of those lures on you to try to get you into an uncomfortable situation? It is important to follow a few special safety rules for avoiding tricky people with lures (even if they are known to you).
  - B. Know that you always have the right to say "NO" to anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable, even if it is an adult and you were taught to do what adults tell you. You have the right to be respected and tell someone that is what you need. For example, "Uncle Tom, I feel uncomfortable when you keep tickling me. I need you to stop when I say it is enough!" or "I'm sorry I can't help you find your lost dog, but my parents do not allow me to go off alone with someone. Maybe you should find an adult to help you."
1. Tell a trusted person (remember you named some of them in the beginning) when someone makes you feel uncomfortable or when someone tells you to keep a secret about an uncomfortable situation. Even if someone threatens you if you tell, it is important to still tell.
  2. Always let a trusted adult know where you are at all times and whom you will be with. Never be in a situation where you are alone with a person who makes you feel uncomfortable.
  3. Always stay alert! Sometimes we might know what a lure is, but get involved in the situation and get tricked without realizing it.

**Closing:** Ask the children to either name or draw a picture of something new they learned today that would help them stay safe.

End with a blessing for God's protection – "May God's love surround you and protect you from harm at home, at school and at play. May the Lord bless you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

## Lesson Plan: Ages 11-13

**Objective:** To help youth recognize lures used by those who sexually victimize others via the anonymity of the Internet. To give young teens skills to avoid being victimized by Internet sexual predators.

**Opening Prayer:** "I have formed you and I know you," says the Lord. (Psalm 136) Reflect on God who knows us better than anyone and calls us by name. No one is anonymous to God.

**Presentation and Process:** *Watching Out while Having Fun (5 minutes)*

- Ask young people what are some things they like to do for fun?
- When we decide to do something for fun, we tend to just do it and only think about the fun it will be. Rarely, if ever, do we think about the dangers that something fun might hold. For example, we think that rollerblading is fun, and it is! But it's more fun when we are aware of and prepare for the dangers inherent in rollerblading. We need to know how to stop, what protective gear to wear, etc. If so, it can be great fun.
- What are some of the dangers to be aware of in the things you mentioned above? How many of you think surfing the net and meeting people online is fun?

**Internet Safety Scenarios (15 minutes)**

Divide the group into three and give each group one of the following scenarios to talk about. Call the group back together after about 5 minutes to report on what they said.

- A. *You create a screen name by using your first name, last initial and birth date to make it easy for you to remember. It is easy to remember, but is this screen name a good idea? Why or Why not?*
- B. *You are in a chat room and someone starts to talk to you. She says she is your age and lives in a nearby town. At the end of a long conversation, she says she wants to meet with you. You really want to make some new friends and are interested in meeting her. What to do?*
- C. *You are creating your own website. You want to make it in your personal style. What information should you put on it and what should you avoid putting on it?*

If the young people come up with ideas for Internet safety, affirm them, then mention the others they did not come up with. Review some of the dangers and lures predators use via the anonymity of the Internet (see Appendix – "Internet Safety")

**Using the Internet Safely (15 minutes)**

Ask young people to come up with some "Ten Commandments" for online safety. Then fill in what they missed. Talk about the importance of parents in helping them to avoid the dangers of the Internet and to keep their online use safe and fun!

**Other Ways to Be Safe (10min)**

The internet is just one way that people try to trick young people into a situation that is not safe. A sexual predator will use other ways to make friends with you in order to take advantage of you. (See Appendix for age appropriate lures). Lead a discussion on how each of these tricks can be avoided.

**Closing**

Be sure to stress that if they ever feel that someone has tried one of these 'lures/tricks' with them, they should tell a trusted adult immediately.  
Send them forth with a simple prayer blessing them with God's love.

## Lesson Plan: Ages 14-17

**Objective:** To help teens to set appropriate boundaries in their relationships with both adults and peers.  
To develop skills for addressing situations where boundaries are crossed.

Opening Prayer: 1 Corinthians 13 (The gift of love)

### Knowing How to Distinguish Good/Bad in Relationships (25 minutes)

#### How do you know when you are in a good relationship?

- A good relationship is life-giving. The other person encourages you to grow. It does not demand all your time and attention; you are proud to be with the other person in the circles of your family and friends; you maintain our individuality while in a couple relationship; it is respectful; you feel a comfortable sense of belonging.

#### How do you know when you are in a bad relationship?

- A bad relationship stifles you. It is demanding and possessive. You feel isolated from friends and family and embarrassed by the other person's behavior; you feel trapped and lose a sense of yourself; there is a loss of control over your own choices; it is not respectful of personal boundaries; you feel "disconnected" from yourself and others.

Put young people in groups of two. Ask them to create a scenario of a pair of friends, a couple, or an adult/teen relationship in each of those two categories above (good relationship and a bad relationship). Share their scenarios with the large group as time allows.

### Recognizing Boundaries in Peer and Adult Relationships (15 minutes)

*Boundaries are the physical and emotional limits a person establishes in his/her relationships.* Examples of physical boundaries include the comfortable physical distance we determine when we interact with people, when we allow people to touch, hug or kiss us, the sexual boundaries we set. Different cultures determine different physical boundaries. Some cultures accept greeting of others in physically demonstrative ways-with hugs and kisses, even with those they do not know; others accept only minimal eye contact in meeting someone new. It is important to know the culture you are dealing with for appropriate physical boundaries. Most boundaries reflect our personal preferences or our values. Emotional boundaries include limits we establish on what personal information we disclose to others, and how we respect others' self-esteem and feelings. Emotional boundaries are crossed by manipulative behavior, name calling, sarcasm, ridicule, put-downs. Some people reveal a lot of personal information immediately, while others take longer to get to know. Some people welcome and even expect others to probe into their lives, while others are more "private," choosing to reveal themselves gradually with time and trust.

In good relationships, each individual is respectful of others' boundaries and does not cross them. In bad relationships, boundaries are ignored and people feel uncomfortable and even violated. Sometimes an individual tries to manipulate the other into believing he/she should cross his/her own pre-set boundary. This technique is often used to get others to cross over sexual boundaries.

#### What are some warning signs that someone is trying to cross your physical or emotional boundaries? (See Appendix)

- A person gives you alcohol or drugs.
- A person tries to get you alone or asks you to keep a secret, or threatens if you reveal this.
- A person tries to win you over with gifts, special praise or consideration.
- A person uses conditions to get you to do something you might want. For example, "If you want a good grade, you need to have sex with me."
- A person tries to isolate you from your support system (like friends and family).
- A person is persistent in trying to talk you into what they want, despite your saying "no."

You have a right to have your boundaries respected and a responsibility to respect others. It is important to recognize when a person is trying to cross your boundaries and stop it immediately, even if that person is someone you know.

## Lesson Plan: Ages 14-17 continued

### Refusal and Assertive Skills for Safeguarding Boundaries (20 minutes)

- Give each group these scenarios and ask them to address each. Then choose pairs to role-play each of the three in front of the group.

1) A girl/guy wants to date you. S/he is constantly at your locker, at your lunch table and always around, trying to get your attention and get you to accept their invitation for a date. You are feeling your boundaries are being crossed and need to let this person know.

2) Your girl/boyfriend has been putting you down both in private and in public around friends. He makes fun of your mannerisms by accentuating them and laughing; he makes negative comments about your looks and tells you that you are lucky you have him/her because no one else would want you. You recognize your emotional boundaries are being violated and you need to address this.

3) An assistant coach you admire seems to favor you over the others. He appears when you are alone in the locker area and has "accidentally" touched your breast and buttocks on a few occasions. You don't want to hurt his feelings and you know he has control over whether you start on the team or not. But his behavior is making you uncomfortable as you recognize that boundaries are being crossed. You need to deal with this.

4) Your employer calls you at home and talks about her personal life, gives you gifts. It is well known among the other employees that she favors you. It seems she is coming on to you, even though you are 15 years younger. One night she asks you and only you, to work alone with her until late and promises to bring you home. This makes you uncomfortable; especially when she urges you to tell your parents you are going to a friend's house and will be home by your 1:00 a.m. curfew! You don't want to lose your job, but you know you need to address this.

Point out through the role play:

- The need to be assertive and use "I feel," and "I need," statements.
- To get away from the person violating their boundaries.
- To tell a trusted adult who will help you determine whether or not to pursue this as harassment or abuse.
- The need to address the issue with someone, even if they are an adult in authority and have power over you.
- Teens may be sexually abused by either men or women.
- Teens are as vulnerable to lures as are children, since offenders know how to use lures so effectively and convincingly.
- To know beforehand clearly what your boundaries are, so you are not in a situation to have to determine them under duress.

## APPENDIX

### I. TRICKS/LURES USED BY SEXUAL PREDATORS

Below are a list of the most common tricks used by sexual predators to lure children into an abusive relationship. After each description is the ages group(s) that are most susceptible to that lure/trick.

**Bad News Trick** – The predator tells a child that something bad happened (sickness or death of a parent, fire...) and that the predator was asked to pick up the child and bring them home. (Ages 5-7, 8-10)

**Bribe Trick** – The predator offers something special that the child may want, then ask for sexual favors in return. (Ages 5-7, 8-10)

**Can I Help You Trick** – The predator may give assistance to a child when needed or may offer to help the family of the child by offering rides, or babysitting. This puts the predator in a position of trust for future abuse. (Ages 5-7, 8-10, 11-13)

**Drug and Alcohol Trick** – Drugs and or alcohol can be given to a child to make it easier to take advantage of the child. (Ages 11-13, 14-17)

**Game Trick** – Wrestling, tickling, accidental or deliberate contact with genitalia as part of the rule to a game played with a child. (Ages 5-7, 8-10)

**Help Me Trick** – The predator may ask for help from a child such as asking for directions, finding a lost pet, to carry heavy packages. (Ages 5-7, 8-10, 11-13)

**Internet Trick** – Predators will try to get personal information from the child. The predator may act as though they are the same age as the child to establish a friendship. They will often send the child sexual material, and will try to set up a meeting with the child. (Ages 11-13, 14-17)

**Position of Power or Authority Trick** – A predator may be in a position of authority such as a coach, police officer, priest or teacher and use this position to get children to be obedient to their request. (Ages 5-7, 8-10, 11-13)

**"You Are Special" Trick** – The predator gives special attention or favor to a child to gain trust and for future sexual abuse. (Ages 8-10, 11-13, 14, 17)

## **II. INTERNET SAFETY**

Technology has been a wonderful gift to expand the horizons of learning for children, teens and adults. But this same technology can expose children and teens to dangers. Sexual predators will often use the Internet to sexually exploit children and teens. They will often spend a great deal of time gradually seducing minors by establishing trust – they listen to children’s stories, connect with their interests, give advice. Then they may slowly introduce sexual subjects into the conversation or lure the child/teen into a face-to-face meeting.

Since some children and teens are curious about sex and sexually explicit material, going onto the Internet is an easy way for sex offenders to take advantage of the opportunity to exploit them. Predators may gradually desensitize children/teens in order to lift inhibitions around talking about sex.

Here are some simple rules for online safety:

### **Keep your identity private.**

Never give your name, address, phone number, school name, birthday, photograph or any other personal information to someone online. Predators will do anything to gain access to your information and may use lures to do so. For example, they may say that you need to give them some information in order to gain access to a chat room or a site they are recommending to you! Don’t fall for that! Or, they are astute in getting information from your screen name. Often people use a birth date in their screen name. This is a giveaway that you are a child or teen, which attracts the attention of the predator.

Realize that people are not always who they say they are! You may think you are speaking to a peer, when in fact, it is a predator in disguise, all the time gaining information from you they will use later. This is particularly true of “teen only” chat rooms - it’s impossible to tell who is a real teen!

### **Never respond to an e-mail, instant message, chat comments or newsgroup messages that are hostile, inappropriate or in any way make you feel uncomfortable.**

The best response is to simply get away from the site and make an adult aware of it. In public chat rooms, there is usually a monitor who will screen the comments, but not so in private chat rooms. Be wary when someone asks you to leave the public chat to join them in a private chat room. A private chat room gives a predator free rein to say whatever they want to you.

Never open a spam e-mail message as this may automatically get you into a database for future inappropriate messages. Always know your sender.

Be wary of those who try to isolate you by turning you against friends and family. This is a common lure to get children/teens to turn their allegiance to the predator.



**Never, ever, arrange to meet someone you meet online without parental permission and supervision.**

Always let a parent know of any invitation to meet someone. If your parent is assured that this might be a peer who wants to make a friend, meet the person in a public place accompanied by your parent. Never meet someone alone!!! If your parents say no, trust them. It's NO!

**Always talk with your parents to establish rules and expectations for going online.**

For your own safety, parents need to be able to monitor a child/teen's Internet activity. The computer should always be in a public place in the house. Parents may use some sort of chip or filter to deny access to certain types of material. Parents may put limits on the amount of time a child/teen is online, as well as for what reasons a child/teen can be online.

### **Warning Signs for Parents!!!**

- Is your child spending large amounts of time online, especially at night?
- Is your child using an online account that belongs to someone else?
- Does your child quickly change the screen or turn the computer off when you come into the room?
- Does your child make phone calls to someone you don't know, receive mail or gifts from someone you don't know?
- Do you find pornography or inappropriate material on the computer?
- Is your child becoming increasingly isolated from the family and being drawn to the computer instead of interacting with friends?

Parents, learn everything you can about the Internet, and teach your children appropriate "netiquette"!

For more on Internet safety see:

[www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

[www.safekids.com](http://www.safekids.com)

[www.safeteens.com](http://www.safeteens.com)

N.B. The original sexual abuse awareness lesson plans were developed by the staff of the Diocese of Albany. We thank them for sharing their curriculum with us.