
Touching Safety™ Program

Junior High Level, Grades 6 – 8

Lesson Plan 11 and 12: Partnering with Parents for Safety!

Getting started with Lesson:

Principle: Working together with the adults in our lives can help keep everyone safe.

Catechism: Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The *right to the exercise of freedom*, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person. This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order. **#1738**

Parents must regard their children as Children of God and respect them as human person. Showing themselves obedient to the will of the Father in heaven, they educate their children to fulfill God's law. **#2222**

Goal: To teach children, parents, guardians, other caring adults to be our partners in creating safe environments.

Learning Goals: To strengthen the communication and partnership between parents and children with the common goal of keeping children safe.

- Children and parents create a special safe word that will be the signal to children that any person claiming to be sent to get the child by the parents must know before the child goes with him or her.
- Children will learn behaviors that are inappropriate from a stranger as well as someone well known to them, such as family, friends, neighbors, coaches, teacher or catechist, etc.
- That parents and children continue to build communication and partnership in the goal of keeping children safe.

Dealing with the pre-adolescent age—key concept is “transition”

The junior high school child is experiencing a period of rapid growth. The emergence of interest in the opposite sex is occurring. These young people are concerned about physical change, body size, skin, and hair length. Concepts depend a great deal on body image as young people complain of being either too physically mature or too physically immature. Peer groups play an important role in shaping attitudes and interest. Caregivers need to regularly assure youngsters that changes are normal though the rate varies from person to person.

Parents, catechists, teachers, youth ministers, and other caring adults must also listen to children and observe what's going on with them. Let young people be themselves. Let them explore their self-expression—and know who they are with, what they are doing and remind them of the importance of protecting themselves during this time in the young person's life. During this time, children are completely self-absorbed and many are naturally less communicative.

Vocabulary words:

- Partnership – Persons sharing with each other in some action or endeavor.
- Safe code – A word or phrase that children and parents agree is a code to let children know the people wanting to take them somewhere were sent by parents.
- 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.

Supplemental Resource Material for Teachers

One of the most valuable tools for parents and children to use as partners in creating safe environments is the use of a unique word or short phrase that has special meaning or is chosen only for this purpose. Parents and children can come up with the word or phrase

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and an agreement that the children won't tell anybody and the parents will only give that word to someone who has their permission to pick the child up.

Working together with the children to create a partnership for safety empowers the children and reassures parents. The word can be anything that is easy for the child to remember and unique enough that is not used in everyday conversation. Something that is special to the child or represents a special shared memory can work really well. For e.g.: 'Rainbows', 'Clowns', 'Circus', 'Dinosaurs', or the name of grandparents, dog or cat would fit the bill. These are words a child can easily remember. However a predator couldn't easily guess which one of these words was the safe word.

Junior High Level, Grades 6 - 8

Lesson Plan 11 and 12: Partnering with Parents for Safety!

Supplies: TV and DVD Player
Power to Protect DVD

Activity #1: Play the Power to Protect Introductory Video

Activity #2: Partnering with Parents for Safety

Discussion: Today's discussion begins to introduce the young people to the value of partnership and working together with parents as a team to accomplish some goals such as personal safety. The lesson involves a discussion to create partnership as a concept and a fun activity to create the experience of partnership and what it can provide and what happens when it is missing or when a partner does not participate.

Begin by asking questions to find out what "partnership" means to the young people. They may be familiar with the word and they might THINK they know what it means, but defining it to be able to apply it in this situation will be new and unfamiliar. It is also likely that they see "partnership" in a particular situation or person but not as an idea that is more universally useful. For example, they may experience partnership as being assigned someone to work with on a class project or someone to team with when playing a sport. For them, in other words, partnership is likely to be situation specific.

Today we are going to talk about partnership and how working together we can create safe environments. Who can tell me what "partnership" is?

Points to emphasize or make:

- Partnership is working together
- Everyone has an important responsibility
- Each person must do her or his part
- Partnership eases the load on one person and spreads it around
- In some situations, partnership is necessary to complete a task or fulfill a commitment
- Responsibilities are not necessarily equally shared between the partners

How is partnership part of your life?

When you work with partners on a project for example, do you choose your partner or is one assigned?

Which kind of partner is better to work with? One you choose yourself or one that is chosen for you?

What makes one better than another?

How do partners divide the workload?

When you work with a partner or partners, how do you decide to do the job?

Most of the time partnership seems simple. You work together with someone in your science class for example to complete a project. Each of you has to do a certain amount of the work to get a good grade. But, what happens if one of the partners does not to do his or her part? Do you pick up the slack? Do you just give up on the project? Do you talk it over and work it out? What happens?

NOTE: In this discussion, there is an opportunity for the students to begin to really consider what they think they know about partnership. It will be challenging for them to connect the lesson to safety from predators but that is not your job this session. This lesson is about laying the ground work for working together in a partnership with parents. The work of creating that partnership will be done in the next lesson.

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In order to give us some sense of what it takes to work together to accomplish a goal in partnership, we are going to do a fun activity together. (Note: If girls are wearing skirts, please consider the alternate activity.)

Directions: Begin this exercise with two students who are of equal height and weight. Have the partners sit on the floor with their backs pressed together. The goal is to stand up in unison without losing contact. They can talk to each other, but they have to keep some part of their backs together at all times. In addition, they have to keep their hands off the floor – no touching the floor.

Once the first pair has accomplished the task, add two more to the partnership. The students should be facing away from each other and staggered so their back touches two people. No hands touching the floor at any time.

Continue making longer groups until the entire class succeeds together.

What was that like? How hard was it to work in partnership with one other person? What happened when there were more and more people added? What if someone did not do their part? What happened then?

This exercise begins to give you a sense of how partnership can help you accomplish goals together and how difficult it is to get the job done when one partner is not participating.

Alternate Activity: If you have a number of girls in skirts that will be eliminated from the first activity or a classroom environment that does not work well for the first activity, you may choose the alternative activity. At the end of the activity, follow it with the same discussion listed above.

Assemble a group of 12 or more students and have them stand in a circle facing each other. Tell the students to close their eyes and reach out with their right hand. With their right hand, they should grab the hand of another child.

Without moving or letting go, have the students open their eyes and use their left hands to connect with a different child. No child should be holding both hands of another they must each be holding on to two other children.

When all the students are connected by both hands, they have formed a "human knot." Their task is to work together to untangle themselves without letting go of one another's hands. You should soon witness considerable communication and strategy formulation among the children as they try to free themselves from the "knot."

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Activity #3: Identifying trustworthy adults

Directions: The next question for the students is, "Who do you tell?"

Ask your students to think of some of the adults in their life that they trust. Ask them to make a list in their minds, but tell them not to write it down because this is a very private issue and is a matter of personal safety. When your students are looking for people to include on their lists, they should consider the following questions:

- Who are the people who proved they were trustworthy in the past?
- Who are people they know that others have trusted with serious subjects, problems, and events?
- Who are the people who listen to them and treat them with respect?
- Who are the people that respect their wishes and their parent's rules?
- Who are the people they know that will have their best interests at heart?

It is important for your students to begin to confront the challenge of speaking up when something like this happens—regardless of how they feel. In situations like this, the offender will work very hard to convince the student that the student is responsible for the relationship and that nobody will believe the student if the student says otherwise.

Note to Teacher: Many young people 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 young people feel empowered to report this sort of behavior when it first occurs.

In conclusion, explain to your students that it is imperative they never stop trying to get help. If the first adult they tell does not intervene in a situation, they should tell someone else until someone *does* listen to them and *does* take action to protect the young people involved.

Activity #4: Review and discuss the touching safety rules

Directions: In preparing for this activity, the instructor/catechist should review *Teaching Touching Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Other Caring Adults*. Then, discuss the fact that a child has a right to say “No,” and to expect the other person to listen and respect the “No” response to personal issues—even if the other person is an adult.

These exercises are intended to empower young people to begin to think about safety issues and to be their parents’ partner in making sure that the child has the tools needed to resist the overtures of a potential child molester.

Talk with adolescents about risky situations they might encounter with adults and other young people and discuss appropriate ways to respond. Remember that adolescents are dealing with enormous peer pressure while trying to understand their independent role in the world apart from their families. It is not always “cool” to say that you must tell someone if you are touched or approached in an inappropriate or sexual way. So, do your best to stress the importance of good communication while speaking to the adolescent in a way that has him or her actually engage in hearing the message, rather than ignore you.

Discuss situations that could be a part of a grooming process. As you look at the situations, you will see that none of them are clear cut examples of grooming. Discussion allows the young people to work out the issues involved in determining whether the adult’s actions are part of the grooming process. It is important that young people begin to recognize the elements of grooming and identify things that are “red flags.” Some examples of grooming are:

- Adults or older adolescents who allow young people to watch R-rated or X-rated movies. (In the first situation, the mere fact that an adult allows a child to watch an R-Rated movie is not necessarily grooming. However, if the movie is one the parents have forbidden the child to see and the adult tells the child to keep it a secret, the adult’s action become more suspicious.)
- Adults or older adolescents who allow young people to play popular, but violent, video games even though the young person’s parents have said “no” to this activity.
- Adults or other adolescents who tell dirty jokes or look at “adult” (naked or sexually explicit) pictures.
- An adult or older child who does something unsafe and, when the young person says, “Stop,” the adult or older child agrees to back off but asks the child not to tell anyone what happened.
- An adult or older child who allows young people to break the rules.

Discuss difficult situations that encourage the young people to look carefully at challenges that might arise and think through the issues so they can come to a safe and healthy decision. This is an excellent opportunity for young people to begin to confront the challenge of doing the right thing in the face of peer pressure and the child’s real need to “fit in” and be part of the group. Some examples of difficult situations are:

- A friend confides in you that someone has molested him or her or has done some things that make the friend uncomfortable with the other person.
- You are at a friend’s house. The parents are gone and your friend wants the two of you to get into the liquor cabinet for some “refreshments.”

Prayer to end the lesson:

(Have this prayer on a poster on the wall and as a handout for the students to pray along with you and take home with them. It is a variation of an Old Catholic Traveler’s Prayer to be said before beginning the journey. Remind the students that as they grow up, they are on a kind of journey through life. Each time they leave their own home or their own room to go out on their own, they are traveling. Prayer can help prepare them for the journey and guide them along the way.)

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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.