

Lesson 6 for Grades 3-5

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 the primary age—key concept is “energy”

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 better as they learn proper grammar / punctuation, and become more refined with communicating their ideas. Children of this age are away from home more often than earlier in life and need to start recognizing that safety issues can arise when they are off with friends, under the supervision of a 3rd party, or at other events / locations. They like to be in constant motion and are always on the go. Groups are important. This is the “gang” age with friends of the same sex. Capable of intense loyalty to others, they usually have a best friend in which to confide. Although truthful about big things, they are less so about the smaller things, often making up alibis or shifting the blame to others. 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. The difficulty in dealing with boundaries with this age group is that these children are moving from dependence toward independence. Ultimately, we all must learn to listen to that guiding voice inside our head and to trust “that uneasy feeling in our gut.” That little voice or uneasy feeling is a warning sign that something is wrong. Telling them “the rules” will not be enough. Children of this age need to learn to reason it out for themselves. The adults involved are primarily concerned with safety issues that the children don’t seem to be able to see clearly—at least not yet. Caregivers can be more effective when dealing with this age by including them in the discussion while establishing rules or guidelines.

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.]

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 3-5 Video links:

English K – 5:

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

Spanish K – 5

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

ACTIVITY OPTION #1: Be Your Own Superhero

Background: This activity will provide opportunities for discussion and role-playing 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.

Discussion: 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 children to typically feel excited or happy, such as: a birthday party, Christmas, going to the park, riding a bike, hearing a favorite song, playing a game, flying a kite, 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 tummies. 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!
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.
4. Then, you'll need to go to a safe adult for help. Can anyone tell us the names of their safe adults?

Activity:

Scenarios: You will need to guide their responses in some of the scenarios.

- A. An older child starts rubbing your shoulders while you are playing over at their house and this makes you uncomfortable, or embarrassed, so your face starts to feel hot and gets red, and your heart starts beating faster. What might your body be telling you? What can you do?
 - a. Say "NO! I don't like it when you do that."
 - b. Go to another area of the room and play with something else.
 - c. Tell a safe adult.
 - d. Call your parents and ask them to come and pick you up.
- B. A friend of your parents tells your mom that they can watch you after school one day so your mom can go to the store. 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. 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.
- C. At school, another child touches you in a way that makes you feel confused and makes your stomach feel yucky like you are going to be sick. What might your body be telling you? What can you do?
 - a. Tell the other child "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 child at school.
- D. 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. Take a deep breath and know that it's OK to not hug someone if you don't want to.
 - b. Use your arms to push them away.
 - c. Duck out from under their arms so they can't grab hold of you.
 - d. Tell them "I don't like that—don't hug me that way."
 - e. Go tell a safe adult.
- E. Someone gives you twenty dollars to spend on a videogame or app, but you know you are not allowed to play that game or app. Then they ask you to keep it a secret, which makes you feel uncomfortable and your eyes tear up because you don't want to get into trouble and feel like you are going to cry. What might your body be telling you? 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.
- F. 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 lies 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 might your body be telling you? 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.
- G. (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 might your body be telling you? What can you do?
- o Take a deep breath and remember that you have safe adults who want to keep you safe, and tell a safe adult right away.
 - o Stop playing the game or app until you can tell a safe adult—leave the content there while you go find them.
 - o Talk to a safe adult about how that made you feel, because your feelings are important.
 - o Do not respond to the person who makes you feel unsafe, and tell a safe adult.

Discussion: Ask your child 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 might you feel if someone (either an adult or another child) touches you in a way you don't like or is unsafe?
 - o Pay attention to your body and feelings.
 - Your stomach might feel yucky or funny inside.
 - You might start to sweat.
 - 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 child is touching you in an unsafe way?
 - o Say "No! Stop that."
 - o Try to leave the situation if possible, and
 - o Tell a safe adult as soon as possible.
 - o 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 an older child touching your private parts—what should you do?
 - o Say "No!" because it's an unsafe touch.
 - o Try to leave and get away if possible.
 - o Tell a safe adult as soon as possible.

Concluding Statement: Whenever something happens that makes you feel unsafe, whether it is happening now, or it happened in the past, or maybe even the future, it is never your fault and it is never too late to tell. Remember the safety plan! Say no, try to leave and get away, and tell a safe adult as soon as possible. If you don't get help with being safe, tell another safe adult! You have lots of safe adults in your life who can help you and want you to feel safe (such as your teacher, your school counselor, and your family).

ACTIVITY OPTION #2: NetSmartz Video "Enter Badromeda"

Background: This short 5-minute video is shared with permission from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and can be played for children. It is designed to open a simple discussion with children about cyberbullying.

Description: In, "Enter Badromeda," watch two friends, Nettie and Webster, get lost in the online land of Badromeda. After falling into an abandoned transport tube, Nettie and Webster are carried into a deeper layer of the cloud called Badromeda. They quickly realize that they'll have to put their NetSmartz skills to work by not responding to the taunts and drama of the strange creatures they encounter.

Click here for the video link and then look through the videos to find "Enter Badromeda":
<https://www.netsmartzkids.org/into-the-cloud/>

Discussion: Before showing the video, pose these questions:

Ask: "How would you feel if someone said something mean or unkind to you online?" *Answers could range from sad, angry, confused, scared, upset, etc.*

Ask: "How would you feel if someone said something mean or unkind to a friend of yours? What if it were online, on the computer, or on your cell phone?" *(There's no wrong answer at this point; just accept the responses and let the children know that you'll discuss the best safety plan for unsafe or uncomfortable situations that happen in person AND online.)*

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, discuss in conclusion: Let's recap 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!