



Office of
ETHICS & INTEGRITY IN MINISTRY

A brief message from the EIM Office to Lesson Leaders:

Dear Lesson Leaders,

Thank you for your service in ministry at your parish or school. The work you do helps to build the Church of tomorrow. The children placed in your care, no doubt, look to you as an example of faith and as a role model.

As you know, Empowering God's Children seeks to teach children about safe boundaries and what to do if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Talking about boundaries and safety, especially when it comes to sexual abuse, can be challenging for adults and for children. However, research shows that talking about safety can de-stigmatize these conversations and make it easier for children to tell a safe adult when something uncomfortable or unsafe has happened to them. It is our responsibility as safe adults to give children every tool possible to keep themselves safe if we aren't there to protect them. The lessons you teach directly impact the safety of the children you serve.

A child may disclose abuse to you during your time as a teacher/catechist. You must know to stay calm, assure the child of your commitment to their safety, and immediately make a report to civil authorities (instructions on reporting abuse are found at www.austindiocese.org/report-abuse). If you would like more information on responding to abuse, please email the EIM Office and ask to be assigned the Lesson Leader Orientation, which teaches about what to do when a child discloses abuse.

If you have any questions about Empowering God's Children, or anything EIM related, please always feel free to call or email the EIM Office.

Once again, thank you for your dedication to the children in your community. It is through safe adults like you that we continue to make our Church a safer and healthier environment for everyone to grow in faith according to God's will.

Sincerely,

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Lesson 5 for Grades K, 1 & 2

Being a Safe Friend

PRINCIPLE

Children must know that being a friend means that we “do the right thing” when it comes to healthy friendships with their peers: meaning we recognize unsafe situations, intervene (when possible) and get the information to a safe adult.

CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE

“Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one finds a treasure. Faithful friends are beyond price, no amount can balance their worth.”
—Sirach 6:14-15

“Do not be a foe instead of a friend.”
—Sirach 6:1

OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, the adult lesson leader teaches and reinforces students responding with action when they or a friend are presented with unsafe situations. After Lesson 5, children should be better able to:

- Participate in healthy friendships
- Recognize that they can do something to help themselves and their friends when confronted with unsafe situations
- Respond appropriately to unsafe situations involving themselves or their friends:
 - Say “No!” if involved in an unsafe situation
 - Try to leave the situation if they feel uncomfortable
 - Tell a safe adult as soon as possible (even if it happened to a friend)
- Technology Component: Understand similar actions apply for Online activities, too.

Background for Lesson Leaders:

Before beginning this lesson, the Lesson Leader should complete the VIRTUS Lesson Leader Orientation, and/or read the VIRTUS *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide*, as it 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.

This message of being a “safe friend” needs special attention for two reasons. First, the idea of safe friends should not be confused with the adult's specific role when it comes to appropriate boundaries with youth. In this safety lesson, the message of being a “safe friend” is primarily geared to assist children with understanding *how to be a safe friend to themselves and to other youth*. Lesson Leaders are not being asked to be friends with children; rather, Lesson Leaders and caring adults in the life of a child are always called to be “friendly” with youth, and not their “friends.” This is an important boundary distinction. In the healthiest of relationships between adults and children, adults are known to be safe.

Second, the underlying message of this lesson focuses on healthy relationships and boundaries. Please be very clear in your communication to children in that they are *not responsible* for each other. Misinforming children by saying that one person's welfare is a child's responsibility could make a child feel more guilt if they weren't able to prevent or stop abuse from occurring for themselves or a friend. The distinction for this lesson is that there are times when children are being abused, or they know a peer is in need of help, but, they don't always know the best way to assist. Being a safe friend means that children do the “right thing” for themselves, and for each other—meaning that they perform action, or intervene in safe ways when they are aware of a problem.

Keep in mind some of these myths to unpack during the lessons: sometimes children may not be aware that they're allowed to say “no” to a behavior that makes them uncomfortable. They may make promises with their peers to keep safety secrets in an attempt to protect them, not realizing that it's most important to deliver knowledge about unsafe situations to safe adults. They'll also need to know that it's never their fault (nor will it ever be their fault) if they or someone they know has been abused, or is hurting.

This age group: Dealing with the primary age—key concept is “activity”

Young children have lively and vivid imaginations, are growing less self-centered, and are becoming more conscious of others. Their attention span is short—approximately 20 minutes. Try to keep these children as engaged as possible with movement. They build on concrete experiences, love to learn, and are highly inquisitive. However, they rely almost entirely on others to define good and bad, and safe versus unsafe behavior—but they do understand “rules,” which is another phrase for boundaries. At this age, children are beginning to differentiate between positive and negative aspects of everyday life, and questioning adults' expectations of blind obedience. At the same time, they are learning how to respect and care for their own bodies in terms of hygiene, eating and activity. Parents and caring adults should make every effort to create an environment with honesty and trust, where children are free to ask questions about life and their own bodies to set the stage for each child's life-long, healthy relationships with others. This is the time to discuss safe and unsafe behaviors, and to enable children to practice safety away from home.

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Ensure that attendance is being taken. You will need to note:

- (1) Grade(s) of Children Being Taught: _____
- (2) Number of Children in Attendance: _____
- (3) Number of Children Absent: _____
- (4) Number of Children who Opted-Out: _____

Needed for the lesson: Utensils to color with

Begin in Prayer (you may use your own prayer or the one provided):

Lord, thank you for all the blessings in my life.

Allow me to walk in Christlike Love as an example to those around me,

Propagate Peace wherever there is turmoil and dissent,

Reflect the Kindness of Christ even when there is anger,

Stand firm and Faithful in the Truth of God,

Show Self-Control when others show poor decision-making,

Be Patient and slow to anger, even in times of stress,

Let my Joy overflow and bring happiness to others,

Live with Goodness and honor so that I may be a safe harbor to those who are afraid,

And correct wrongs with humility, practicality, and Goodness.

Through all these Fruits of the Holy Spirit, Lord, I ask that you guide me to be a beacon of your safety and love to those I love. Allow me to be a good and faithful friend, always turning to you when I am unsure.

In Christ's name I ask this, Amen.

Lesson 5 for Grades K, 1 & 2**Being a Safe Friend****Activity 1: Personal Space Bubbles**

Instruct the children to spread out and hold their arms wide like an eagle. Have them flap their arms around and turn in circles. Explain the following:

Each of us has an invisible personal space bubble that exists around us. This bubble should be a boundary for how close someone should be to us. If someone gets too close to us or makes us uncomfortable, it means they are invading our personal space and not respecting our boundaries.

Respecting boundaries—we should have respect for ourselves and respect for others. Respect for ourselves means we understand our dignity and value as a person, and work to create or maintain boundaries to protect ourselves. We feel upset or uncomfortable when someone doesn't honor our own boundaries, and we communicate with the right person if we need help. Respecting another's boundaries means you care about them, and won't do anything that would bring them harm, and that you communicate with the right person to get them help if they are being harmed by someone else. *[Give children examples of respecting others, i.e., not calling people mean names, not hitting others, following rules at school or at home, stopping an activity when someone asks, letting an adult know when someone is in pain or hurt, etc.]*

Activity 2: Coloring Page

Explain the following definitions from the provided coloring page.

Safe friends and safe adults—safe people won't hurt you without a good reason and won't intentionally confuse you. They listen, 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.]*

Unsafe friends and unsafe adults—unsafe friends and unsafe adults put a child at risk for emotional, spiritual, and physical harm. These are people who place a child in danger for their own purposes without concern for the welfare of the child. They also do not consistently listen to the parents' wishes or the child's boundaries. *[Tell children we can know when someone is unsafe if they do not follow the rules or listen to our boundaries.]*

Safe touches—touches that have a good purpose, aren't intended to hurt, and should be familiar. They're safe and can also be meant to keep you healthy, even if the person isn't known well, as long as the touches are appropriate for the particular relationship, such as when mom kisses your forehead at night, when you high-five your teammate, etc. *[Avoid saying safe touches that feel good are "safe, loving, or show*

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someone loves you” since sometimes touches are safe and necessary, but can also hurt— although they hurt for a good reason to keep children safe, such as stitches, a doctor shot, or dental cleanings.]

Unsafe touches—inappropriate touches, could be meant to hurt or scare, or are contrary to the touching rules. If unsure about a touch, ask a parent. *[Unsafe touches include hitting, punching, tripping, kicking, spitting, touching private parts (areas covered by a bathing suit), etc.]*

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 selfishly, having poor manners, bragging about an accomplishment, etc.]*

Mean—describes behavior where someone says or does something hurtful on purpose, once (maybe twice). The aim is to hurt intentionally, often motivated by anger. *[Examples include putting someone down so the mean person looks/sounds better, making fun of how the person dresses or looks, insulting the person's skills or intelligence, or saying/behaving in an unkind way after a disagreement, saying things like: “why would you wear that, it looks terrible on you” or “you're so dumb, you should quit.”]*

Bullying is different from being rude or mean. It is cruel; the intentional, repeated exposure of negative and aggressive behaviors to a targeted person over time. The bully will say or do something intentionally hurtful and keep doing so without being sorry for their actions. A key aspect is the ongoing pattern of power imbalance, in which the bully has more control or influence. *[Examples include physical, verbal, and emotional aggression, in-person and online; social exclusion, hazing others, spreading rumors or inappropriate content, cyberbullying, etc.]*

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Activity 3: You will read the following story and intermittently pause to give the kids a chance to identify feelings. Identifying feelings is an important activity that helps children fortify and uphold their boundaries. When they feel specific ways, they are directed to communicate with a safe adult for themselves and their friends as a way to help.

- Ask: What should we say if we feel unsafe or uncomfortable with someone crossing our boundaries or personal space bubble? *No, Stop, I don't like that*
- Ask: When we feel uncomfortable, scared, or if someone tries to see or touch our private parts, who should we tell? *A safe adult, our parent, our teacher, our school principal, our priest, any safe adult. Tell them, "If one safe adult does not listen to you, go tell a different adult. You deserve to be listened to, and you have a right to be safe!"*

I am going to tell you a story and ask how you would feel if you were in the story.

1. **Say:** Joey loves chocolate. It is his favorite thing. He just found out that he has been invited to go to a special party where you can pay a small amount of money, and there will be nothing but chocolate to eat. It is a chocolate party! What could be better! **Ask:** "How might Joey feel?" *[Excited/joyful/happy]*
2. **Say:** The best part is that Joey gets to go to the chocolate party with his best friend, Sam. The only part that Joey doesn't like is that Sam's dad is taking them to the party. Joey doesn't always like being around Sam's dad. Joey would rather his dad went with them to the chocolate party. **Ask:** "How might Joey feel about Sam's dad going instead of his own dad?" *[disappointed/sad/unhappy]*
3. **Say:** Before leaving for the chocolate party, Joey and his mom sit down to talk. She reminds him of their rule about how many treats he can have from a candy store. Joey's family has a special way of letting each child decide which treats they want. Each kid in the family has a certain amount of money to spend in the store. Joey and his sister can buy anything they want as a treat—as long as there is enough money to pay for it. This is always the rule, even when Joey and his sister are with their grandparents. Joey's mom gives him some money to spend and reminds him that he can have all the chocolate his money will buy—but when he runs out of that money, no more chocolate. Joey is thinking about what he will choose. **Ask:** "What kind of candy would you choose?" *[allow kids to answer]* **Ask:** "Hmm, how might Joey feel now?" *[thoughtful/excited/ready for party]*
4. **Say:** Joey goes to the party, and there are hundreds of different kinds of chocolate (chocolate bunnies, chocolate bars, chocolate milk). After a while, Joey had eaten several pieces of chocolate and spent almost all of his money. Then he sees the best thing yet—a chocolate train. Joey loves trains and has never seen a chocolate train before. When Joey asks how much the train costs, he realizes that he does not have enough money to buy the chocolate train. **Ask:** "How might Joey feel now?" *[sad/disappointed/regretful]*

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5. **Say:** Sam's dad notices that Joey is sad and asks him, "What's wrong?" Joey explains that he does not have enough money left to buy the chocolate train—and trains are his favorite thing. Sam's dad tells Joey he will give him the money to buy the train. Joey explains that taking money from Sam's dad to buy the train is against his family's rules. Then, Sam's dad tells Joey that "it's okay—it will be just our secret." Joey really wants the chocolate train, but he knows that it's against the rules and worries that his Mom will be upset if he takes money from Sam's dad to buy more chocolate. **Ask:** "How might Joey feel now, and why?" *[puzzled/confused/uncomfortable] [allow kids to answer the "why" – because Joey doesn't want to break the rules his parents set. Other adults are not supposed to ask you to keep secrets. Because he does not want to get in trouble.]*
6. **Say:** "What should Joey do?"
 - a. Give the children an opportunity to work this out by talking through all the issues. Guide the discussion using the "Points to make" section below.
 - i. Joey has some options that are appropriate and safe.
 - ii. He could say "no" to the offer from Sam's dad and let him know that following Mom and Dad's rules is the right thing to do.
 - iii. He could also call his mom and ask her if it's OK for Sam's dad to loan him some money.
 - b. Points to make during the discussion component:
 - i. Discuss with children that one of the ways that we know someone is "safe" is that they are people who always respect your safety boundaries and your parents' rules.
 - ii. If Joey says "no" to Sam's dad, Joey should let his Mom and Dad know that he did what was right and listened to the family rules—even when he did not want to do it. (This will let parents know that the message that they are teaching is being received—and it will let them know that Sam's dad may not be the best chaperone for Joey's activities without making a big deal out of the incident.)
 - iii. Remind your students that they are surrounded by many caring adults who want to protect them. Even so, parents are the people who care most about their safety and well-being. And, that letting the parents know the youth did the right (and safe) thing in a difficult situation is cause for celebration!

End the Lesson in Prayer (you can use this, or any, prayer).

Lord, help me to remember your blessings each day. Allow me to remember that I am special and made in your image. Give me the courage to stand up for myself and others, no matter what. Thank you for loving me and for giving me safe friends, parents, and adults who want to keep me safe and happy. Amen.