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## Touching Safety™ Program

### Primary Level, Grades K – 2

### Lesson Plan 11: Partnering with Parents for Safety

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#### Getting started with Lesson 1:

**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.

**Parent Notice:** Send out a letter to the parents outlining the goals and objectives of the *Touching Safety* Lessons and giving parents an opportunity to “opt out” of the program if they choose. Make sure that each parent has a copy of the *Teaching Touching Safety Guide for Parents, Guardians, and other Caring Adults* and recommend that they read it carefully before the lessons begin. Let parents know that the lessons will reinforce the message in the parent's book in age appropriate material.

Parents and guardians are the primary educators of their own children. This right of parents to educate their children, particularly in the area of morals, values, and human sexuality, is also recognized by the Church as “an educational duty.”<sup>1</sup> The *Touching Safety* program establishes guidelines and principles to assist parents in this important task. The program was developed to help educators, catechists, youth minister, and other caring adults support parents as they provide their children with education in this critical area of human development. And, it responds to parents concerns about their own ability to accomplish the task.<sup>2</sup>

#### Dealing with the primary age—key concept is “activity”

Small children have a natural curiosity, a lively and vivid imagination and are growing less self-centered and becoming more conscious of others. Their attention span is short, approximately 20 minutes. They build on concrete experiences, love to learn, and are highly inquisitive. However, they rely almost entirely on others to define good and bad for them.

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<sup>1</sup> *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum educationis*, Proclaimed by Pope Paul VI, October 28, 1965, Article 3 at 44.

<sup>2</sup> “It is not easy for parents to take on this educational commitment because today it appears to be rather complex, and greater than what the family could offer, also because, in most cases, it is not possible to refer to what one's own parents did in this regard.” Ibid. at 47.

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When establishing the guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behavior, parents and teachers should make every effort to create an environment where children are free to ask questions. This early experience of honesty and trust will set the stage for each child's life-long relationships with significant adults. In addition, creating an atmosphere of open inquiry where questions are encouraged invites children to begin to listen to and learn to trust their own instincts and to begin to learn how to evaluate.

At this age, children are beginning to differentiate positive and negative aspects of everyday life and are beginning to question the adult's expectation of blind obedience. At the same time, they are learning how to respect and care for their own bodies in hygiene, eating and activity.

Caregivers need to be open, honest and available to answer questions correctly with language children can understand. This is the time to discuss safe and unsafe touch so as to enable them to practice safety away from home.

### **Vocabulary words:**

- Safe Word – A word that parents and children agree is a signal that the person wanting to take the child is a safe adult.
- Safety – An environment that protects children and adults from harm.
- Partnership – Working together with others or another to accomplish a common goal or objective.
- Safe Touch – A touch that has a good purpose, is not intended to hurt, and is familiar and safe.
- Unsafe Touch – Any touch that can hurt or scare someone. Or, any touch that, although it starts out safe, becomes uncomfortable, confusing, or scary.

### **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 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 is the safe word.

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**Preparations:** TV and DVD Player  
Power to Protect DVD  
Supplies needed include:  
Blank Chalkboard and chalk, an easel, or whiteboard and markers  
Print out poster of "Safe Word Rules"

**Activity #1: Play the Power to Protect Introductory Video**

**Activity #2: Creating Safety**

**Activity:** Invite the children to stand in a circle with you and hold hands with each other. (Notice whether they jockey for positions to stand by their friends or resist holding hands. This is a great resource for the discussion.) Begin the lesson with a song of prayer to the tune of "Are you sleeping?"

God our Father (teacher)  
God our Father (children repeat)  
We thank you (teacher)  
We thank you (children repeat)  
For our friends and family (teacher)  
For our friends and family (children repeat)  
Amen. (teacher)  
Amen. (children repeat)

Ask the children to sit down in a circle with you in a chair at the top of the circle. Ask the children to share with you some of their favorite words.

**Teacher:** *Sometimes it is hard to know when a person or a situation is safe and when it is not. Sometimes people are really nice to us, but they are not really safe to be around. When people are nice and polite and seem to care about us, we don't always know if they really can be trusted.*

*One of the ways we can work with our parents to make sure that the people who want to take us somewhere can be trusted is by picking a safe word that only you and your parents know. Then if your parents send someone to pick you up at school, for example, they can tell that person the safe word and that person can share the safe word with you. Knowing the safe word will let you know that the person is safe and your parents want you to go with them.*

*We need to show our parents about safe words and how to have the words work. So let's talk about the safe word rules. (Put the poster up on display.)*

1. *Pick a fun word that we like that is easy to remember and a kind of special word that would be hard for someone to guess.*
2. *Only share the safe word with your parents. Tell parents to give the safe word to anyone that they send to pick you up or give you a ride.*
3. *Never go with an adult who doesn't know the safe word unless your parents are there or give permission.*
4. *Change the safe word regularly.*

*Now let us talk about each of the rules. What are some of your favorite fun words (Write these on an easel or board). Capture this information in a way to recreate it and distribute it to parents after the class. The way parents can see a list of words that kids thought would work in such a situation. Letting the children be part of setting up this safety mechanism is very empowering for them and nurtures the relationship between children and parents.*

**Note to teacher:** Encourage the children to come up with unique words that are fun and easy to remember, but unique enough that they would be difficult for a stranger to guess.

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Now that you have a safe word, remember it is safe because it allows you and your parents to communicate with each other when you are not together (like a special language). That word helps you stay safe and lets your parents know you are safe. It is important that you never tell anyone the safe word, except when talking with your parents or guardians. Remember, only parents can give out the safe word to someone they are trusting to take care of you.

**At the end of the discussion, ask the children the following questions:**

1. Who can you give the safe word to? (only the parents or guardians)
2. When can you tell someone other than your parents the safe word? (Never)
3. Who can parents give the safe word to? (Someone they are sending to pick up or take care of you. Someone you can trust.)

*Rule 3 is never go with an adult who doesn't know the safe word. What does 'Never' mean? Safe word is not necessary when you are expecting someone special to pick you up. For example, mom has called the school to let them know that grandma is going to be picking you up today. No safe word is required. The safe word is to keep you safe from those who want to take you away without your parents' permission. When that happens you just say "No!" and stay where you are until someone safe comes to get you.*

*There are a lot of fun words for us to use to make sure you stay safe. Choose new safe words as often as you need to so no one can guess it. The key is to stay safe.*

### **Activity #3: Review and discuss the touching safety rules**

**Directions:** 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.

- Safe Adults are people who touch only in ways that are safe.
  - People who don't hurt without a good reason (e.g., if a nurse gives a child a shot, it will hurt—but, the shot is for a good reason).
  - People who don't confuse or scare you on purpose without a good reason (e.g., if someone tells you that there's a fire in your house and helps you escape—but, warning you about a fire and helping you escape is a good reason to scare you).
- Safe adults respect your wishes and your parent's rules.
- Remind children that most touches are safe.

**Begin Activity:** Listen carefully so you can be ready to "hoot and holler." If I name a safe touch, raise your fist in air and yell rah, rah. On the other hand, if I name an unsafe touch, do a "thumbs down" and shout boo, hiss, boo.

- Your mother gives you hug when you wake up.
- Your father gives you a kiss after tucking you into bed.
- Tommy gives you a "high five" when you win the game.
- Someone says they want to touch your private body parts—or, they try without even asking.
- Your cat purrs and rubs around your leg.
- Someone at school says they want to take you down a dark hallway to show you something.
- The stranger behind you in church tries to shake your hand during the peace greeting.
- Your friendly dog is wagging its tail and licking your face.
- The next-door neighbor child pushes you down on the sidewalk.
- Someone is running down a hallway at school and a teacher reaches out and puts a hand on the person's shoulder to stop them from running and possibly falling.

Ask each child to add an example of a good touch and a bad touch.

### **Special Safe Adults**

Talk about “special safe adults.” A child’s life may include a number of safe adults, but there are only a few select people who have the right to touch a child’s private body parts. Special safe adults are the only people who may see or touch a child’s private body parts, and only for the purpose of keeping the child clean and healthy.

Parents or guardians will tell you who, of the adults in your life, are special safe adults—and when these special safe adults have permission to touch your private body parts. No one has the right to touch your private body parts except these special people and they can touch your private body parts only under certain circumstances—to keep you clean and healthy.

Special safe adults are those who have permission to help you take a bath, go to the bathroom with you if you need help, to help you put clothes on or change clothes, or to help you when you are sick.

### **Prayer to end the lesson:**

**Teacher:** *“God wants us to be safe and healthy. God even gives us a special angel to help look after us. When we think about how hard it is to remember the safe word rules, we can ask our Guardian Angel for help. So, let’s pray together for our Guardian Angel to look after us and help keep us safe.”*

Angel of God,  
My guardian dear,  
To whom God’s love entrusts me here.  
Ever this day be at my side.  
To light, to guard,  
To rule, to guide.

Amen

# Safe Word Rules

- 1. Pick a fun word that we like that is easy to remember and a kind of special word that would be hard for someone to guess.**
- 2. Only share the safe word with your parents. Tell parents to give the safe word to anyone that they send to pick you up or give you a ride.**
- 3. Never go with an adult who doesn't know the safe word unless your parents are there or give permission.**
- 4. Change the safe word often.**