

Lesson 5 for Grades 3—5

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 “energy”

This age group is learning how to function independently of their parents. They know how to read, their writing skills are improving, and their comprehension levels are giving them a better sense of abstract ideas—all refining their communication. Youth this age are away from home more often now, and need to recognize safety issues can arise when they're off with friends, under others' supervision, or elsewhere. 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, they usually confide to best friends. Although truthful about big things, they're less so with smaller things, often creating alibis or shifting blame. With a strong sense of right / wrong, fair / unfair and more ability to discern safe vs. unsafe, they're able to use logic, can argue and hold strong debates. The difficulty in dealing with boundaries is that this age is 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,” which is a red flag that something is wrong. Telling them “the rules” won't be enough because this age group needs to reason it out for themselves. Adults will be more effective with the safety plan if they include children in the conversation when establishing rules or guidelines.

ACTIVITY OPTION #1: Play the (optional) introductory video as an icebreaker

The introductory video for youth in this age range is designed to open a simple discussion about personal boundary safety. The brief video is not intended to be a substitute for the lesson itself. It's merely an introduction designed to "break the ice" and assist the transition of completing the interactive Lesson Activity Options. If the video is shown as an optional activity, please use in conjunction with one of the additional activity options, because discussion and practice are critical components needed to teach youth how to protect themselves. They learn best by "doing;" not just listening. Please communicate with your coordinator to obtain video access.

ACTIVITY OPTION #2: Review and discuss key vocabulary words

- **Private body parts**—those body parts covered by a bathing suit.
- **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.]
- **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.]
- **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.]
- **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.]
- **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.]
- **Safe friends and safe adults**—safe people won’t hurt you without a good reason and won’t intentionally confuse you. They listen to and 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 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 stiches, a doctor shot or dental cleanings.]
- **Unsafe touches**—touches that are inappropriate, 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, etc.]
- **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 it’s wrong for an adult or another child to ask 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”.]

- **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.]
- **Mean**—describes behavior where someone says or does something hurtful on purpose, once (maybe twice). The aim is to intentionally hurt, and is 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 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 it, without a sense of remorse. A key aspect is the ongoing pattern, involving an imbalance of power where 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.]

ACTIVITY OPTION #3: Thumbs Up or Down: Check In, Discuss the Truth & Recap the Facts

Activity: This is a 3-part activity. Children will have an opportunity to hear different scenarios involving safety and provide their initial reactions with a “thumbs up” or a “thumbs down.” The Lesson Leader will quietly observe the responses. Then, a discussion will ensue, with the Lesson Leader emphasizing any areas that needed special attention. After having learned more about the facts surrounding “being a safe friend,” children will hear the different scenarios again, and will be able to provide their reactions again.

Preparation: In preparing for this activity, review all of the questions and answers ahead of time, and *Activity Option #2: Review and discuss key vocabulary words.*

Directions: Assemble children in their seats with their heads down, and eyes closed. Tell them that you’ll be going through an activity with a few parts. In the first part, you will ask them a few questions about safety. Direct children to hold up a thumb for an answer of (Yes) to the question and point down their thumb for an answer of (No). If they are unsure, they should place their hand palm down on the back of their head. Observe responses and make notes of any responses that will need future attention.

Discussion: **PART 1: Check-in” component of Thumbs Up or Down.** For the first part of this activity, you’ll simply be asking the youth these prior knowledge questions, making a mental note when there seems to be confusion or great diversity amongst the answers. Simple answers are provided below, just so that you will know what areas need fortification. The fortification will happen in Part 2 during the discussion component; only ask the questions in Part 1; do not yet address the “Answer to be discussed in PART 3.”

1. **Question for PART 1:** Is it our parents’ responsibility to keep us safe and healthy?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3: YES / THUMBS UP, parents and caring adults are responsible for the welfare and safety of children. Children can help protect others, too, because it’s the right thing to do, but it isn’t the child’s job to keep anyone else safe—that’s the job of the adult.

2. **Question for PART 1:** Do kids need to know about bicycle safety, like wearing a helmet?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3: YES / THUMBS UP, while it’s the adult’s job to primarily protect children, youth can also be aware of how to be safe, too.

3. **Question for PART 1:** Is it OK for a kid to say “no” to an adult or friend if they don’t feel safe or comfortable?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3: YES / THUMBS UP, boundaries are important! And, it’s OK to say “no,” when you don’t feel comfortable.

4. **Question for PART 1:** Is it OK if someone calls you “stupid” or other names, and doesn’t make you feel good about yourself?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3: NO / THUMBS DOWN, it’s not OK for anyone to make you feel bad about yourself or call you names. This is an unhealthy relationship, and it’s not OK to be in an unhealthy relationship. You deserve to be in a safe and happy friendship and relationship with others—especially with your friends and family members.

5. **Question for PART 1:** Does anyone have the right to harm your body by causing bruises, burns, bleeding, broken bones, or bites?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3: NO / THUMBS DOWN, no one has a right to cause you harm or put you in an unsafe situation—not even an adult; in fact, you have a right to be safe.

6. **Question for PART 1:** Are strangers the only people who hurt children?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3: NO / THUMBS DOWN, no; strangers can hurt youth, and people we know, trust and love can hurt youth, too. Sometimes people hurt us, but they also tell us they love us, which can feel very confusing. Someone who is safe will never hurt you (or allow you to be hurt without a good reason, like removing a splinter to prevent an infection) or cause you to feel confused about a safe touch or action.

7. **Question for PART 1:** Do you have the *right* to tell an adult to stop if he or she is touching you in a way you don't think is okay?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3: YES / THUMBS UP, boundaries are important! And, it's OK to say "no," when you don't feel comfortable. It's also important to try and leave the situation if you feel uncomfortable (or scared, or confused, or puzzled, or unsure, or if someone tries to touch your private parts), and then tell a safe adult as soon as possible (even if it happened to a friend).

8. **Question for PART 1:** Should you *tell* someone if physical abuse happened to you, like hitting you, pushing, or punching?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3: YES / THUMBS UP, sometimes we have to be a safe friend to ourselves, too! That means, standing up for ourselves when we are hurt, or being abused, or even just feel uncomfortable, and getting the information to a safe adult.

9. **Question for PART 1:** Should you tell someone if the physical abuse happened to your friend, and they made you promise not to tell?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3: YES / THUMBS UP; When we know (or feel like) there's an unsafe situation where a friend is hurting, we should always take that information to a safe adult, even if you promise your friend. It's safer to ask an adult for help when this happens. Tell a safe adult; ask for their help.

10. **Question for PART 1:** Should you tell someone if someone only threatened to hurt you—verbally or online)?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3: YES / THUMBS UP, even just the "threat" of abuse can be just as bad as actual abuse. Sometimes we have to be a safe friend to ourselves, too! That means, standing up for ourselves when we know that someone is a problem, or when we are hurt, or being abused, or even just feel uncomfortable, and getting the information to a safe adult.

11. **Question for PART 1:** If a youth is hurt by someone, or abused, is it ever their fault?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3: NO / THUMBS DOWN, no, it's never a youth's fault (nor will it ever be their fault) if they or someone they know has been abused, or is hurting. [It's also not a youth's fault if an adult isn't taking care of them the way that they're supposed to, like giving them the food they need, or a blanket for sleeping when it's cold, etc.]

12. **Question for PART 1:** Is it OK to keep quiet about being abused if you also did something wrong, and are worried you might get into trouble?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3: NO / THUMBS DOWN, no, it's not OK to keep quiet about being abused, even if you're afraid you're going to get into trouble—even if you are afraid that you also did something wrong. It is never your fault, regardless of the circumstances, if you've been abused.

13. **Question for PART 1:** Do you have the courage to stand up for yourself or for a friend, and tell an adult when you're hurt, uncomfortable or being abused?

Answer to be discussed, in PART 3:
i. RESPONSE WILL BE SUBJECTIVE.

Note: This answer to whether or not children will have the courage to stand up for themselves or for a friend will be subjective, and dependent on the individual youth. The hope is that each child will say "YES" with THUMBS UP, because they will recognize that standing up for themselves when they are unsafe or when they *feel* unsafe, or even just uncomfortable, is the right thing to do, and the best way to "be a safe friend."

An important point for Lesson Leaders to recognize is that children may be aware that something unsafe or unhealthy is going on their own lives or in the lives of their friends, and they need to deliver that message to a safe adult. Emphasize that we bring these types of unsafe situations that are hidden or secretive, "out into the open."

- ii. Explanation to give to the youth: Sometimes we have to be a safe friend to ourselves, too! That means, standing up for ourselves when we feel uncomfortable, or getting the information to a safe adult. The fact that you feel upset and uncomfortable is a good sign that you have to do something about it! When someone is hurting you or making you feel uncomfortable, regardless of whether it's from a friend, and regardless of what they've said to you to try and get you not to tell, you have to tell a safe adult about it as soon as you can. Even if the situation happened in the past, it's never too late to tell a safe adult!

PART 2: “Discuss the truth” discussion component. After all of the questions have been asked, the Lesson Leader will lead a discussion that goes through the following points:

- There are also people in our lives who are our safe adults. Safe adults are there to protect us, to listen to us, and get us help when we need it. It's a very important responsibility they have to protect us! Some of us know a safe person for sure, our school guidance counselor! Can you think of other examples of safe adults? (perhaps our parents, grandparents, other family, teachers, church employees, doctors when mom/dad are there, fire fighters, etc.)
- Kids can also be a “safe person” for others. This is called being a “safe friend.” **As a kid, it's not your JOB (as kids) to protect others. It is not your responsibility, because you are kids.** But, when we do know that someone is hurt or hurting, then we **should try to help** by getting that information to a safe adult. Let's recap these really important points:
 - Whose responsibility is it to keep kids safe? (ADULTS; it's the adult's job to protect kids)
 - Can we, as kids, also help when we know there's a problem? (Yes, usually kids can help, too)
 - How can we, as kids, help the most? (Take the information to a safe adult; a trustworthy person)
- Sometimes there are people in our lives who are not safe.
 - These are called unsafe adults. Unsafe adults don't follow our safety rules, and being around them can feel confusing. Sometimes they might hurt us. Sometimes we might just feel uncomfortable with what they are saying or doing, and it's important to pay attention to those feelings.
 - We can tell when someone is unsafe when they don't listen to our boundary rules, especially when it comes to “unsafe” and “safe” touches.
 - Friends can be unsafe, too.
- Sometimes adults don't listen to kids—even ones who we thought were safe.
 - Have you ever had a situation where an adult doesn't listen to you? (You have a right to be safe. Your friends have a right to be safe. If you know that there's important information about safety, adults should listen to you. If a safe adult isn't listening to you, take the information to another safe adult. Keep taking the information to a trustworthy person, and may a different trustworthy person, until you feel that you've been heard.)
- In our communities, homes, schools, and friendships, sometimes we know that someone is really sad or that someone is hurt, or that they are unsafe. When our family or friends are hurt, there are different ways we can help them, depending on the situation.
 - For example, what is the first number to call if you are home alone with an adult and they fall and get really hurt? (You can always call 911 to get help from safe people)
 - Or, maybe your good friend told you that someone at home hit them, or hurt them. In these cases, you can still call 911, or you can also tell your safe adult to get help. It's the adult's job to keep kids safe.
- Sometimes we are around people who make us feel sad, nervous, or confused. They might try to touch us in our private parts, and may not listen to us when we say “no.” This is not a safe person.
 - If this happens to you, whom should you talk to? Talk to a safe adult, as soon as you can.

PART 3: “Recap the Facts” component. After discussing the elements in PART 2, go through the initial questions *again* from PART 1, and ask children the same questions; this time they can have their heads up and can verbally say “yes” or “no” if they'd like to participate. Alternatively, you can let them know they can “shout” the answers if they'd like!

Recap the reason why the answer should be “YES / THUMBS UP” OR “NO / THUMBS DOWN.” The rationale is listed within the subsection responses. Special consideration will be made for the final question.

ACTIVITY OPTION #4: In-person and Online Scenarios: What do I do?

Activity: Children will have an opportunity to evaluate different scenarios and think through possible alternatives and potential outcomes of different decisions. A discussion will ensue, along with role playing options.

Preparation: In preparing for this activity, review all of the questions and answers ahead of time, and *Activity Option #2: Review and discuss key vocabulary words.*

Depending on the size and age group, the Lesson Leader may make small groups and give each group the scenarios, or the Lesson Leader may engage the entire large group in the same discussion.

Directions: Assemble children in a circle so they are facing each other to have this discussion. The Lesson Leader will read each scenario to the group, and then the group will brainstorm solutions to the problem by reflecting and responding to the questions. Be sure to emphasize that students should think through alternatives before taking action. Then have children puzzle through and predict the possible outcomes of each action. By the end of each scenario, the group should come to a consensus of the “right thing to do” and have an idea of how they could also do the “right thing” in a similar situation with role playing and reasoning through the problem.

Discussion: The Lesson Leader will lead discussions on each of the scenarios, involving youth as much as possible.

SCENARIO #1: What do I do when I am late? BACKGROUND: This is a scenario where the youth have to work through the fear of doing something wrong, and then dealing with how to communicate when they feel afraid and/or guilty. This is important when dealing with boundaries and communicating with safe adults, because sometimes children do not communicate about important matters if they feel that they did something wrong or are going to get into trouble. This scenario helps them to work through these types of feelings ahead of time, and to understand the importance of a safe adult.

Say: Gina is supposed to be home before dark. She’s *already* late, and is afraid her mom will be really mad at her and that she will get into trouble. If she takes a shortcut through the vacant lot/backyards of the neighborhood, she will get home faster. But, her mom has told her never to go through those areas alone or in the dark. She also remembers that her friend told her that one time a guy showed her private parts there—but made her promise not to tell anyone. They never told their parents about it.

- How do you think Gina felt when she realized that she was late?
- Why did her mom tell her not to go through the vacant lot/backyards alone? What are the dangers?
- Could there still be risk if Gina went with someone else? (yes)
- What do you think her mother will say when she gets home?
- Will using the shortcut help?
- Have you ever been late? What happened?
- Should Gina have talked to her mom, or another safe adult, about when her friend had a guy show his private parts to her? Should Gina have promised that in the first place? Even though she did promise already, is it too late to tell her mom, or another safe adult about it?

Follow-up discussion / Encourage the verbalization of role playing: Discuss with the students the outcomes of being late or taking the shortcut. Is it worth the risk of taking the shortcut? What would you say to your parent if you got home late? What could have been done differently?

Special elements to consider and reiterate to the youth: Sometimes we feel afraid to do the right thing, or talk to safe people when we feel like we’re going to get into trouble. When it comes to your safety and your boundaries, and safe and unsafe touches, you must always communicate that information to a safe adult—even if it’s possible that you feel guilty, or as if you’re going to get into trouble. Even if it happened a long time ago, or if it’s still happening. Or, if it hasn’t happened yet, but you suspect it will, soon. Do this also for a friend.

It’s not OK to keep quiet about being abused, even if you’re afraid you’re going to get into trouble—even if you are afraid that you also did something wrong. It is never your fault, regardless of the circumstances, if you’ve been abused.

SCENARIO #2: What do I do when someone is at the door? BACKGROUND: This is a situation where it may be very hard for some youth because they may be worried that they are coming across as being “rude” or “mean.” In some cases, they will not uphold their own personal boundaries in favor of not being rude to the other person. Instead, you want youth to uphold their boundaries no matter what, especially when they feel uncomfortable. Children do not have control over the type of lock on a door or whether there is a “peephole,” or way to see who is at the door, but all need to practice responses for their particular home situation. It would be good if children were never left alone, but it is unrealistic not to prepare them for the eventuality that they may have to answer the door when there are no adults around. Children must learn to decide whether or not to open the door based on the rules of the home. Parents might instruct children not to open or answer the door at all.

Say: Juan is home alone. Juan’s parents have a very specific rule about answering the door, they say that he is not allowed to answer it when they aren’t there. The doorbell is ringing. The person has been there for a while, and Juan

feels like the person knows he's there. Should Juan open the door? Why or why not? What should he do, peek through the hole and say, "Who is it?" Or, should he ignore the bell? Or something else?

- How do you decide who to let in?
- What if the person at the door is the next-door neighbor?
- What if the person at the door is a repair person? How would you know it was really a repair person?
- What if your parent said that no one could come over, not even friends, but the person at the door is a friend? Should you open the door?
- What if the person at the door is a family member? Does the rule still apply? (yes; the rules and boundaries always apply unless your parents have stated otherwise; contact your parent and ask them if there are any exceptions.)
- How would the rules change if your parent were actually home, but were really busy and didn't realize the doorbell was ringing and told you not to bother them for any reason?

Follow-up discussion / Encourage the verbalization of role playing: Discuss with the students what their own personal rules are at home for answering the door and letting people in, and what are some things that they can say based on what the actual rule is in that particular house. Some options for role-playing: the child may say, "My mom doesn't allow me to open the door. She is busy. May I take a message?" Or, the child may say to themselves, "I am not allowed to answer the door. I am not going to go to the door at all. I am going to stay here in my room, and contact my mom that someone is at the door." Or, there may be other rules that the Lesson Leader can ask of the group, and invite their participation.

Special elements to consider and reiterate to the youth: Note that there may be some variation across cultures and individual students, but that the important element is to uphold the boundary when there is a rule, and to let the children know that they can always place a boundary when they don't feel comfortable. Also, we can't always tell if someone is safe or not JUST BASED on the way that they look; instead, we pay attention to our boundaries and whether they uphold our boundaries and respect the rules our parents set.

SCENARIO #3: What do I do when someone says things online that start to make me feel uncomfortable?

BACKGROUND: This is a similar situation to the previous scenario, except that in this instance, it's much more likely that the youth does not know exactly who the other person is when online (vs. potentially being able to see them behind a door). The irony is that depending on what personal information the youth provides through the Internet, the youth may be "opening the door" to a stranger in a variety of ways. Sometimes it's harder to evaluate safety when online.

Say: Jane and her friend were home at Jane's house, online, when someone starts to message Jane. The boy says he knows her and that they are friends. He seemed really nice at first, which is why Jane talked to him. Then he started to become mean, and sent her images of naked people; stuff that Jane knows she isn't supposed to see. Then the boy says that if she doesn't do what he wants her to do, then he is going to hurt her dog and say mean things about her at school. Jane is uncomfortable and afraid. Jane wants to do what he wants because she loves her dog, and she feels guilty, too, because she knows she wasn't supposed to talk to people she doesn't know, online. She makes her friend promise not to say anything about it to anyone.

- Is it possible the boy really Jane's friend? (NO, friends don't treat each other this way)
- Does Jane really know who the person is? (NO, not necessarily, sometimes it's very difficult to know exactly who the person is)
- If Jane doesn't actually know the person, how is it possible that the person could have known information about her? (Perhaps her profile image, any other associated images with her account, her account name may have revealed information about her, her friends' accounts may have pictures of her and descriptions, her pictures may show her school image or mascot or colors, she may have information showing in the background, etc.)
- Was Jane safer at home because she was with her friend? (Not necessarily, this could give a false sense of security)
- Should the friend keep her promise to Jane, to not tell anyone about what happened?

Follow-up discussion / Encourage the verbalization of role playing: Kids can also be a "safe person" for others. This is called being a "safe friend." As a kid, it's not your JOB (as kids) to protect others. It is not your responsibility, because you are kids. But, when we do know that someone is hurt or hurting, then we should try to help by getting that information to a safe adult. Let's recap these really important points:

- Whose responsibility is it to keep kids safe in this scenario? (ADULTS; It's the adult's job to protect kids)
- Can you, as kids, also help when we know there's a problem? (Yes, usually kids can help, too)
- In this scenario, how can kids help? What should the friend do? (Take the information to a safe adult; a trustworthy person)

- What should Jane have said to the boy?

Special elements to consider and reiterate to the youth: We can very easily “open the door to a stranger” when online or using the Internet, except that so much more information can be revealed online without realizing it. Because of this, youth need to be aware of their behavior online and what information they are sharing about themselves. And, when they are confronted with something inappropriate or scary, they need to tell a safe adult right away.

Even just the “threat” of abuse can be just as bad as actual abuse. Sometimes people that we consider to be our friends might be rude, or mean or, they might even bully us or others. Sometimes we have to be a safe friend to ourselves, too! That means, standing up for ourselves when we know that someone is a problem, or when we are hurt, or being abused, or even just feel uncomfortable, and getting the information to a safe adult. In an online environment, stop what you’re doing and communicate to a safe adult.

Unsafe people: Sometimes there are people in our lives who are not safe. Unsafe people don’t follow our safety rules, and being around them can feel confusing. Sometimes they might hurt us. Sometimes we might just feel uncomfortable with what they are saying or doing, and it’s important to pay attention to those feelings. Sometimes we are around people who make us feel sad, nervous, or confused. They might try to touch us in our private parts, and may not listen to us when we say “no.” This is not a safe person. If this happens to you, whom should you talk to? Talk to a safe adult, as soon as you can.

When we know (or feel like) there’s an unsafe situation where a friend is hurting, we should always take that information to a safe adult, even if you promise your friend. It’s safer to ask an adult for help when this happens. Tell a safe adult; ask for their help.

Note: The Lesson Leader should be careful to communicate to children 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.

End the lesson with a prayer

The Lesson Leader may invite the children to create their own prayer, he/she may lead a prayer, or may use the suggested prayer below.

*Dear God,
Sometimes when things happen, I get scared. Sometimes I just get mixed up—like when a person I care about does something that makes me feel uncomfortable or scared. When that happens, help me remember that I am special and give me courage to tell an adult what happened. Thank you for loving me and for giving me safe adults and parents who want to keep me safe and happy.
Amen*