

High School Level, Grades 9 through 12 (ages 15 through 17 years)

Lesson Plan: Touching Safety Rules/ Safe Friends, Safe Adults and Safe Touches

Principle: Teenagers must respect their own health and safety and the health and safety of others. Young people must guard against those who may harm them through touch (sexual or otherwise).

Scripture: *Do not model your behavior on the contemporary world, but let the renewing of your minds transform you, so that you may discern for yourselves what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and mature. — Rom. 12:2¹*

Goal: To assist educators, catechists, youth ministers, and other caring adults in teaching young people how to prevent or reduce the risk of sexual abuse.

Objectives: Through this lesson the catechist, teacher, or youth minister reinforces the parent's message about touching safety and protecting private body parts. Upon completion of this lesson, teenagers should be better able to:

- Name their safe friends and safe adults.
- Identify special safe adults.
- Respond in an appropriate manner to unsafe situations.
- Understand the rules about safe and appropriate touches and other boundary issues.
- Keep themselves safe and out of danger.
- Protect themselves from people who might touch them in a way that is uncomfortable or otherwise inappropriate.

Parent Notice: Send a notice to parents outlining the goals and objectives of the *Touching Safety* program and giving parents an opportunity to “opt out” of the program should they choose to do so. Every parent needs to return the form noting that their child has permission to attend the lesson or that they have chosen not to have their child attend the lesson. This form must be returned in either instance and retained at the parish/school office.

Dealing with teenagers—Healthy questioning at this age/ Searching

This is the age where all the experiences that began with puberty—the physical changes and the developing emotions—accelerate rapidly as the teenager matures into a young adult. The self-consciousness deepens and matures. The world of “children” is now renounced. Teens believe in their immortality and may tend to be reckless in their behavior. Although it would appear that they reject authority while defining their own independence, in reality they rely on the strength and support they find in parents and other influential adults.

Young people of this age primarily identify with their interpersonal relationships. They are beginning to have a stronger concern for others and have many questions about social relationships and decision making. Safe friends and safe adults are critical at this age because young people have a strong need for role models and mentors in whom they can confide. It is also crucial that they can identify unsafe adults and have the skill to deal with them.

Vocabulary words:

Touching	Unsafe Friend	Unsafe Adult	Slang
Private body parts	Safe touch	Special Safe Adult	Puberty
Secret/s	Unsafe touch	Respect	Peer Pressure
Safe Friend	Safe Adult	No	Boundaries

Activity:

In preparing for this activity, review *Teaching Touching Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Other Caring Adults*. Discuss with teens the reasons that touching safety rules are important. Make sure you reinforce the following points.

- Knowing the rules helps teens deal with potentially threatening situations and, in the process, helps them maintain their own safety and the safety of their friends.

¹ *The New Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday, 1999. (Imprimatur: June 18, 1989).

- Being aware of potentially risky situations, and discussing how to deal with them in advance, are vital to a teen's personal safety.

Teens have a great deal of personal freedom. This freedom also puts them at risk in various ways. Parents and guardians expect teens to take care of themselves and to ask for the help that they need. Discuss with teens the various types of rules that parents or families create to ensure the safety of all family members. State some specific rules regarding what a teen may or may not be allowed to do.

This could include:

- Guidelines teens *know* are there because parents and guardians let them engage in certain activities while saying "no" to other activities.
- Behaviors that parents and guardians expect from their teens and young people, even though they (parents) may have never actually verbalized those expectations.

Remind teens that while most touches are good, some are bad and may pose serious risks to those involved. There are a variety of reasons for touching. Discuss some of the reasons for human touch, and note which touches are good and which are bad.

- Touch can be positive, negative, and sometimes confusing.
 - For example, touch can indicate:
 - An attempt to communicate.
 - Affection.
 - Loving and consensual sexual activity between spouses in the context of a Christian marriage.
 - Use of power and control.
 - A demonstration of anger and hostility.
 - A vehicle for victimization—sexually and physically.
- Discuss different examples of positive touches, negative touches, and confusing touches, as well as ways to deal with negative or confusing touches.
- Discuss ways to say "no" or to otherwise refuse unwanted advances or uncomfortable or unwanted touches.
- Talk about whether there is ever a time when "no" doesn't mean "no." And, if there is such a time, discuss some ways to help determine whether "no" really means "no." **Hint:** If someone says "no" in the context of a human touch, you should always respect "no" as the final answer. Always!

Suggested prayer to end the lesson:

Dear God,

Even though we are each unique, there are ways that we are alike because you made each of us in your image.

Help me to remember to respect myself just as I want others to respect me.

Help me to live as you have commanded me to live, and guide me in times of confusion and uncertainty.

And, help me to remember, God, that in your loving presence I will always be safe and protected.

Amen