

**Middle School Level, Grades 6, 7, 8 (ages 11 to 14 years)**

**Lesson Plan 1: Touching Safety Rules**

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**Getting started with Lesson 1:**

- Principle:** Children must guard against those who may harm them through touch (sexual or otherwise).
- Scripture:** *God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. ... — Gen 1:27, 31*<sup>1</sup>
- Saint:** Our featured Saint for this lesson is Maria Goretti. Please review the instructor's information and be prepared to provide your students with the handout that discusses St. Maria Goretti's life and the role model she provides us with regard to this lesson about the Touching Safety Rules.
- Catechism:** *Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God. — #2319*<sup>2</sup>
- Goal:** To assist educators, catechists, youth ministers, and other caring adults in teaching children 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, children should be better able to:
- Clearly state the rules about inappropriate touching.
  - Describe safe touches.
  - Say "No!" when someone tries to touch them in a way that is uncomfortable or otherwise inappropriate.
  - Identify the situations when secrets are appropriate and when secrets are a threat of harm.
- 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"—to have their children not participate in the lesson—if they choose. We recommend that the *Overview and Founding Principles of the Program*, as well as a copy of this lesson plan accompany the notice.

**Dealing with the pre-adolescent and adolescent age—key concept is "transition"**

The middle school child is experiencing a period of rapid growth. The emergence of interest in the opposite sex is occurring. He or she is concerned about physical change, body size, skin quality, and hair length. Body image is very important to this child as he or she complains of being either too physically mature or too physically immature. The peer group plays an important role in shaping attitudes and interest. Caregivers need to regularly assure youngsters that changes are normal, though the rate of change varies from person to person.

Parents, catechists, teachers, youth ministers, and other caring adults must carefully listen to children and observe *what is happening in their lives*. Let young people be themselves. Let them explore their self-expression; but, know *who* they are with and *what* they are doing, and remind them of the importance of protecting themselves during this dynamic time in their lives. During this time, children are completely self-absorbed, and many are naturally less communicative than at other periods during their development.

**Vocabulary words:**

- Slang
- Puberty
- Peer Pressure
- Private body parts
- Unsafe touch
- Boundaries

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<sup>1</sup> *The New American Bible*, Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1970 (Imprimatur July 27, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana (1997) *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Washington D.C. United States Catholic Conference.

**Middle School Level, Grades 6, 7, 8 (ages 11 to 14 years)****Lesson Plan 1: Touching Safety Rules (continued)****Activity #1: Review and Expand the Touching Safety Rules**

**Directions:** In preparing for this activity, review *Review Teaching Touching Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Other Caring Adults*. Then, discuss the fact that a child has a right to say “No,” and to expect the other person to listen and respect the “No.”

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.

Talk with children about risky situations they might face with adults and other young people and discuss appropriate ways to respond. Remember that children of this age are dealing with enormous peer pressure while trying to understand their independent role in the world apart from their families. It is not always “cool” to say that you must tell someone if you are touched or approached in an inappropriate or sexual way. So, do your best to stress the importance of good communication while speaking to the adolescent in a way that has him or her actually hear you, rather than ignore you.

Discuss situations that could be a part of a grooming process. As you look at the situations, you will see that none of them are clear-cut examples of grooming. Discussion allows the young people to work out the issues involved in determining whether the adult's actions are part of the grooming process. It is important that young people begin to recognize the elements of grooming and identify things that are “red flags.”

- Adults or older children who allow young people to watch R-rated or X-rated movies. (In the first situation, the mere fact that an adult allows a child to watch an R-Rated movie is not necessarily grooming. However, if the movie is one the parents have forbidden the child to see and the adult tells the child to keep it a secret, the adult's action become more suspicious.)
- Adults or other children who tell dirty jokes or look at “adult” (naked or sexually explicit) pictures.
- An adult or older child who does something unsafe and, when the young person says, “Stop,” the adult or older child agrees to back off but asks the child not to tell anyone what happened.

Discuss difficult situations that encourage the young people to look carefully at challenges that might arise and think through the issues to come to a safe and healthy decision. This is an excellent opportunity for young people to begin to confront the challenge of doing the right thing in the face of peer pressure and the child's real need to “fit in” and be part of the group.

- A friend confides in you that someone has molested him or her or has done some things that make the friend uncomfortable with the other person.
- You are at a friend's house. The parents are gone and your friend wants the two of you to get into the liquor cabinet for some “refreshments.”

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Lesson Plan 1: Touching Safety Rules (continued)

Activity #2: Touching Safety Rules Word Puzzle

**Directions:** Hand out the word puzzle and explain the instructions to the children. The actual puzzle and answer key are both available online. Simply log on to [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org), then go to the “Educators” tab, select the Middle School age group, and click through the screens for Lesson Plan 1 until you reach the screen titled: “Touching Safety — Supporting Materials.” From that screen, you’ll be able to print the document that includes both the word puzzle for students and the teacher’s answer key.

Children are instructed to find the words on the list that are related to the topic of “Touching Safety,” and to circle each of those words. Each word will be in a straight line, but it may be written vertically (up and down), horizontally (left and right), diagonally (at an angle), and either forward, backward, or upside down (see the example, below).

**Example:** Find the following words in the puzzle below and draw a circle around the word or color it with a highlighter. The words are spelled out correctly in a straight line. There are no spaces between letters or between words in two-word phrases (For example, “SAY NO” will appear as “SAYNO”). However, words may be upside down, backwards or at an angle. Some letters may be used by multiple words.

SAFE TOUCH	P	A	L	Z	X	I	R	M	R	K	S	T
PRIVATE PARTS	E	B	F	T	E	B	L	A	E	J	P	S
PEER PRESSURE	E	C	S	E	C	R	E	T	S	H	L	T
SECRETS	R	V	O	A	T	F	B	R	P	D	E	R
GROOMING	P	K	S	E	F	J	H	U	E	Y	B	A
BLAME	R	W	A	E	T	E	M	N	C	G	U	P
RESPECT	E	A	C	V	M	R	T	K	T	N	O	E
SAY NO	S	U	Y	A	O	I	Y	O	V	I	N	T
LEAVE	S	B	L	E	W	A	N	C	U	H	E	A
TOUCHING	U	B	O	L	P	G	V	O	J	C	P	V
UNSAFE	R	C	W	E	A	J	K	S	Y	U	H	I
	E	F	A	S	N	U	E	A	I	O	D	R
	N	E	S	N	T	E	R	Y	N	T	U	P
	K	G	R	O	O	M	I	N	G	U	Y	E
	A	S	D	F	G	E	R	O	P	O	I	M

**Middle School Level, Grades 6, 7, 8 (ages 11 to 14 years)****Lesson Plan 1: Touching Safety Rules (continued)****Assignment: "Safe Touch" project to work on prior to Lesson 2 in this series**

**Directions:** You are a news reporter who will be interviewing "the person on the street" for his or her opinion about this question:

What is a safe friend or safe adult?

As a news reporter you will need a response to each of the five "w" questions, including: Who? What? When? Where? And Why? So, replace the underlined word What in the above question with each of the other "w" words, and ask each person you interview all five "w" questions.

**Supplies:** Tape recorder and a new audiotape

**Process:** Conduct interviews with your friends, family members, and classmates using the tape recorder. Address each of the five "w" questions with each person you interview.

After completing the tape, play it back and listen to what various members said.

Do you think anything was left out? If so, what?

Compile a closing paragraph to "wrap it up" like reporters on the street generally do.

Record your closing remarks.

**Finally:** Return to class prepared to share what you have learned. Share your tape recording with your parents, guardians, or other important caregivers. Then, discuss your findings and reflect on what your response would be if someone asked you to answer all five "w" questions regarding unsafe adults.

What is an unsafe adult?

**Suggested prayer to end the lesson:**

Dear God,

Sometimes things happen to me that are confusing or frightening.

When I am confused or feel scared, help me remember what I have learned today.

Help me remember the touching rules so I can protect myself from anyone who might want to hurt me—even if it is someone I like.

Thank you for my parents or loved ones and my teachers who are teaching me how to keep myself safe and healthy.

Remind me that I am special and that you are always with me.

Amen

**References:**

Butler, Alban (1955) *Lives of the Saints*, NY: Benziger Brothers.

International Bible Society (1978). *The Holy Bible, New International Version*. East Brunswick, NJ.

Jones, Alexander, ed. (1958). *Jerusalem Bible: Readers edition*. Paris: Les Editions du Cerf.

Liberia Editrice Vaticana (1997) *Catechism of the Catholic Church (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference.

United States Catholic Conference (1990) *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*. Washington, DC: Office for Publishing and Promotion Services.

<http://www.virtus.org/virtus/pgc-Parent-Handbook 05-03.pdf> retrieved March 5, 2004.

**Supplemental Reading for Children:**

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Girard, Linda Walvoord (1984). *My Body is Private*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman and Company.

Hindman, Jan (2000). *A Touching Book*. Baker City OR: Alexandria Associates.

Johnson, Karen (1986). *The Trouble with Secrets*. Seattle WA: Parenting Press.

Keleven, Sandy (1997) *The Right Touch*. Bellevue, WA: Illumination Arts.