

Primary Level, Grades K, 1, 2 (ages 5 to 7 years)

Lesson 9: Speak Up! Speak Out! Be Heard!

Getting started with Lesson 9:

NOTE: Lesson 10 includes reading the children a book about communication. If you have a book or can get one from the local library, please do. FYI, "Dear Fred" is a book about a young woman who is separated from her half-brother because the parents divorced and the new stepfather moves her and the rest of the family far away. The book is a letter to her brother and includes several examples of communication. Look for it in the local library and read it through. If you have a book that communicates this message better, feel free to use it. You can also get "Dear Fred" from www.amazon.com. Be sure to look this up in advance so you can be prepared for the session.

Principle: Supporting children in learning to speak up, speak out, and make sure they are heard when they are confused or scared or when something happens that makes them uncomfortable or uneasy.

- 1) Choosing the right time and the right person to talk to about things.
- 2) Knowing what to say and how to say it so that adults pay attention.

Catechism: Man is obliged to follow the moral law, which urges him "to do what is good and avoid what is evil" (cf. GS 16). This law makes itself heard in his conscience. **#1713**

Goal: To assist children and young people in being able to speak up when they are confused or scared, to speak out when something happens that makes them feel uncomfortable, and to make sure that they are heard when they talk to adults in their life about something that is important.

Learning Goals: To teach children and young people some guidelines about speaking up and speaking out when they experience situations that make them feel scared or confused or when they feel uncomfortable or uneasy with someone or something that is happening. Empowering children by providing communication skills that can be used in a variety of situations and focusing their application to circumstances that place them at risk related to their personal safety.

- Children and young people can learn age appropriate skills to empower them to communicate powerfully.
- Children and young people can start to learn to identify times, places, and people that provide the best chance for them to be heard when they have something important to communicate.

Parent Notice: Send out a letter to the parents and guardians outlining the goals and objectives of this lesson. Let parents and guardians know that the lessons this year will concentrate on developing communication skills. For this age group, it will focus on starting to identify the when, where, and to whom of communicating something important to the adults in their lives. The lessons also will give the children some beginning tools to help them know "how" to communicate confusing, scary, or simply important information.

If applicable, schedule a meeting before the first lesson for parents to come together and see the materials for both sessions. During the meeting go through the lesson plan and show the parents the activities, coloring pages, story boards, etc. that the children will be creating as well as the important elements of the lessons.

Parents and guardians are the primary educators of their own children. This right of adults to educate their children, particularly in the area of morals, values, and human sexuality, is also recognized by the Church as "an educational duty."¹ These lessons in the *Teaching Touching Safety* program will provide children with some tools they can put to use every day in any number of ways. Of course, we will connect the dots for children between speaking up, speaking out, being heard, and the importance of telling a trusted adult when someone does something that makes them feel scared, confused, or uncomfortable. In addition, we will be reminding the children that bullying tactics by children and adults in their life are also actions they need to tell others about. However, the communication skills at the heart of these lessons will be useful for much more than reports resulting from following the Touching Rules.

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

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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.

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 and young people to begin to listen to and learn to trust their own instincts and to begin to learn how to evaluate potentially risky situations.

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. They are learning about hygiene and beginning to learn about eating properly and testing the limits for activity.

Caregivers need to be open, honest, and available to answer questions correctly with language children can understand. This is the time to talk about ways they can stand up for themselves when they are with adults and others whose behavior is risky or someone on the Internet wants information the children should not give.

Vocabulary words:

- Communication - The imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs.
- Trust — Reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing; confidence
- Heard — To listen to; give or pay attention to what is said.

Supplemental material is available as an additional resource for this lesson plan starting on page 5. This is optional information as a refresher on grooming that may be useful when presenting this lesson.

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Lesson 9: Speak Up! Speak Out! Be Heard!

Activity #1: Play the introductory DVD to begin the lesson.

Activity #2: Classroom Discussion: Speak Up, Speak Out, and Be Heard.

Activity #3: Classroom Discussion: Raise Children's Awareness about Listening

Prayer: A suggested prayer is provided at the end of the lesson. If you wish, you may use this prayer to conclude this lesson with your students.

Supplies and Preparation:

Opening DVD

DVD Player and TV

Pillow Case and enough odd children's toys or other items the children can recognize to complete the activity one for each two children. (at least one item for every two children.) **NOTE: Bring the items into the classroom in the pillow case so that no one can see what's in the bag.**

Storybook of the teacher's choice.

NOTE TO KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS: Choose EITHER Activity 2 or Activity 3 to use with Kindergarten students. These are hard concepts for children that young and expecting to accomplish both exercises in one class is unrealistic.

Activity #1: Show DVD if appropriate

Activity #2: Classroom Discussion: Speak Up, Speak Out, and Be Heard

The main purpose of this discussion is to help children develop communication skills that empower them to speak up, speak out, and make sure they are heard when they have something important to communicate, particularly when there is something to communicate to a trusted adult about behavior that is confusing, uncomfortable, scary, or deliberately hurtful. In the lessons, we want to concentrate on enhancing communication skills and practicing using those skills. We want children to be able to tell someone they trust and make sure that communication is as clear as possible so that what they have to communicate is actually heard.

- *When something important happens, who do you tell? Let the students identify the important, trusting people in their lives that they go to with issues that are important and then ask them the following question.*
- *What kinds of things do you tell them? Use this conversation to have kids start to see that there are different people in their lives they trust in different ways or trust with different information.*
- *Is it sometimes hard to make them understand what you want to say? Let the kids start to confront the frustration they experience when they are trying to be heard and understood and it is not working.*
- *When you want to tell someone about something happening that makes you uncomfortable, is confusing, or seemed scary, how do you know what to say? Do you just blurt it out? Do you share it in little pieces?*
- *Let's do an exercise that can help us find out how good we really are at explaining things in a way that is clear for other people.*

NOTE TO KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS: For this exercise, you will need to explain to the students what it means to "describe" something. So, it is recommended that you have something you can use to demonstrate this while you are explaining the exercise. For example, hold up a fork or a glass or something else simple and ask the students to describe it – be sure to explain to them that they cannot say what it is. They can only talk about what it looks like, what it is used for, its color, size, etc. without saying "it is a fork" or "it is a glass." Without this kind of set up, they may not understand the instructions. Also, keep the items very simple for them – particularly the kindergarteners - because "describing" is a new activity for them. You will probably also have to help them a little as they try to figure out what to say that describes the item without saying what it is.

Divide the students into two equal groups. Select one student from each group to begin the exercise. Have the two students sit with their backs to each other. Have everyone else sit so they can watch the exercise. One teacher, sitting by the student "describing" the object, reaches into the pillowcase and pulls out one of the items in front of the student who is "describing"; making sure the other

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student cannot see the item. Another teacher sits next to the "drawing" student to help them understand the instructions. The first student describes the object to the second without saying what the item is. Participant Two must draw a picture of the item as described by Participant One and then look to see whether the picture is a reasonable likeness of the item being described. Teachers can help the students with both the "describing" and "understanding the instructions" as this is a new activity for very young students. **However, teachers should not give other descriptions to the student drawing the picture. The point of the exercise is to help the students start to learn how to describe something in a way that is understandable.**

Do not expect much and have it be very, very simple. Allow the participants two to three minutes to complete the exercise. Repeat with all the students until every team has a chance to either describe or draw at least one time.

At the completion of each round, Participant Two should have a drawing of the object that at least is representative of the description. Then look at the drawing and the item and see how similar they are and how different. Talk with the students about how hard it is sometimes to describe something to another person in a way that really lets them understand what happened. For example, could different words have been used and if so, what words would have made a difference?

After everyone has had a chance to participate in one capacity or another, ask the students whether they can think of a time when they were saying one thing but the other person or persons did not seem to understand what they were trying to say. The object here is to help the students get present to the fact that it is sometimes hard to communicate to others what you really want to say. It takes thoughtful speaking and concentration from both parties to make sure what you need to say gets heard.

At the end of the exercise, be sure to emphasize the fact that describing something in a way that makes it clear to others what you intend to say is sometimes difficult and takes a lot of practice and concentration. It is also important that children find out what others hear when the children share with them. When you talk to someone about something important, it is okay to ask them to say it back to you so you can be sure you told them everything they need to know.

Activity #3: Classroom Discussion: Raise Children's Awareness about Listening

This activity is designed to raise children's awareness about listening and how hard it can be to hear what someone is really saying.

Have everyone sit down to listen as you read a story. Read the story book to the children without showing the pictures. Add a nonsensical sentence somewhere in the story. At the end of the story ask the children to tell you what they remember about the story. If no one includes the nonsensical statement, ask them if there was anything odd or strange in the story that seemed out of place. If the answer is still "no" read the nonsensical statement again and ask who heard it. Ask if they were listening when you read. Then ask if they remember hearing the strange sentence. If they did, why didn't they say so? Did they think it was just a silly part of the story or did they forget about it because it did not fit?

NOTE: With kindergarteners, the teacher should expect that the nonsensical sentence will provoke laughter or giggling. At this age, they giggle when they hear something they think is funny or out of place – and they love the nonsense of it. That is why Dr. Seuss is so popular with this age group. They really get "Green Eggs and Ham." It is fine if they giggle or laugh at the nonsense. The thing to listen for is whether they include it in their discussion of the story at the end of the book. If they hear it, recognize it, and laugh at it but then don't say anything about it, this is something to note and question. Find out why they did not bring it up – if they don't – and point out that it is important not to overlook things that happen that seem out of place or odd. These may be the very things that we need to take note of and talk with others about.

The exercise is designed to help them start to realize that sometimes when we think people are listening to us, they don't really hear what we are saying. We might have to repeat ourselves or even ask them to tell us what they heard so we can be sure that they are clear about what we were saying.

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 don't know what to do, we can ask our Guardian Angel to help us be safe. So, let's pray together and ask our Guardian Angel to look after us."

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

Supplemental Resource Material for Teachers

The complete grooming process employed by a child molester is usually three-pronged and involves physical as well as psychological behaviors. In person, the process may take months, even years to accomplish with regular face to face contact but through the Internet, predators can break down the child's defenses in a very short amount of time, particularly if the child is vulnerable or uninformed about the risks of the Internet.

The three aspects of the typical grooming process are *physical grooming*, *psychological grooming*, and *community grooming*. All three are going on at the same time.

Physical grooming usually begins early in the process. This is why it is so important for children to know how to tell the trusted adults in their life when something happens that puts them at risk. They need to know that they can speak up and be heard, and they need to know how to communicate in a way that gets the attention of the adult they trust.

One of the most important aspects of grooming is the *psychological grooming*. The molester's goal is to establish a trust relationship early in order to secure the promise of secrecy from the child. Through a number of identifiable behaviors designed to trap the child in a bubble of secrecy, the molester attempts to gain the child's compliance and set him or her up to be victimized. The child is either convinced that the molester is trustworthy and believes this person to be a trusted friend, or the child is scared of the molester and the threats made about what will happen if the child tells. In this situation, the child is confused and afraid, which often results in the child becoming more and more withdrawn and quiet. When this happens, a wall goes up between the parents/adults and the predator and everything about the relationship between the child and the potential molester is distorted.

Among the ways the behavioral warning signs that potential predators use to seduce a child to secrecy are:

1. *Give gifts to children, often without permission.* Predators give gifts to children and tell them to keep it secret. The gifts may be as simple as candy or soda that parents won't allow. However, gifts are often either entirely inappropriate such as perfume, flowers, lingerie or expensive items such as an MP3 player that parents cannot afford, or a bouquet of roses or a box of lingerie for a nine or 10 year old girl.
2. *Allows a child to engage in activities that parents would not allow.* One of the most effective tools predators use is allowing children to do things their parents would not permit. Everything from using alcohol to eating junk food to allowing unlimited, unsupervised Internet access is on the agenda here. This behavior is extremely effective at driving a wedge between children and parent(s). It is important for children to be reminded that when an adult lets them do things they are not allowed to do, the real person who is wrong is the adult, not the child. Give children the freedom to tell you what happened without risking serious consequences, so they will be willing to talk to you when they need to do so.
3. *Uses sexually explicit language and tells dirty jokes.* Children are often curious about things they know are reserved for "adults only." That means that engaging them in language that is sexual in nature will often be intriguing to them and can evoke conspiratorial laughter. The problem is that afterwards, the children are afraid to tell parents because they know it was wrong. Once again, it is important to remember to remind both the children and their parents that the wrongful acts here are those of the child molester, not the child. Encouraging children to share what they have heard from others – new words, jokes, stories – can create an opening for powerful communication. As adults it is also important to remember to keep a calm head about you when a child is sharing. Listen and learn – and then take action to deal with the adult and, at the same time, remind the child that you are proud of him or her for telling; however, those words and those jokes are not used by nice people.
4. *Goes overboard touching.* Potential predators are skilled at finding ways to get their hands on children in ways that could be intimate and still be explained away as "accidental." Wrestling, tickling, and hugging them or picking them up are some examples of the types of "touch" this can include. Obviously we teach children they have the right to say "no" to being touched at all, but we also need to notice this kind of physical contact and teach our children to tell us when anyone touches them this way. Encouraging children to share about these physical encounters will accomplish a couple of things. First, the child learns to trust his or her own feelings, thoughts, and experiences and to express them effectively. Second, the potential predator is less likely to engage in physical contact if he or she thinks the child will tell what happened.

Generally, the grooming process is complex. It can be difficult to identify and interrupt. In addition, placing the burden of prevention on the shoulders of small children is not the best way to accomplish the goals. However, creating partnership with children to assure that environments are safe for everyone is a great way to stop sexual abuse from happening. Teaching them to speak up, speak out, and make sure they are heard is a great way to proceed. This lesson is designed to focus on building those communication skills and encouraging children to be very vocal about inappropriate, confusing, or scary behavior being exhibited by others in the environment.