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## Touching Safety

Primary Level, Grades K, 1, 2 (ages 5 to 8 years)

Lesson Plan 10: Speak Up! Speak Out! Be Heard!

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### Getting started with Lesson 10:

- 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 powerfully communicate.
  - 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 will also 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

Small children have a natural curiosity, a lively and vivid imagination, 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.

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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 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, 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.

Primary Level, Grades K, 1, 2 (ages 5 to 8 years)

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

**Activity #2:** Classroom Discussion: How do we communicate?

**Activity #3:** Classroom Discussion: Learning when and who to tell

**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  
Flash Cards  
Pictures of traffic signs (from the lesson plan)  
A story book about communication of your choice

**Activity #1:** Show DVD if appropriate.

**Activity #2:** Classroom Discussion: How do we communicate?

**Discussion:** Talk to the children about the different ways we communicate. Write down different forms of communication such as verbal, non-verbal, visual, and written forms of communication that people use to send messages as well as alarms and other equipment that are used for communication. Some expanded ways of communicating may include dancing, singing, reading or writing books, fire or smoke alarms, school bells, telephones, computers, etc. You can guide the children in this exercise. As they identify a form of communication, give one or two of them an opportunity to demonstrate the form so that everyone understands. Some examples of ways to demonstrate different forms of communication are:

- *Do you know what it means to “communicate” something?*
- *Communicate is a big word that is for letting someone know something. Most of the time when people think of communication, they think about talking to someone or telling someone something; however, there are many ways to communicate what you want to say or what you are feeling.*
- *There are some ways to let someone know something without talking. What can you do to tell someone how you feel or get their attention without talking? Encourage the kids to think about how they let someone know they are happy, or sad, or mad, or excited without saying anything. They know how to get someone’s attention. To demonstrate these ways of communicating without word, whisper an emotion or feeling to a child and have them act it out. Let the other children guess what is being expressed. If you know any signs used by the deaf to communicate such as the sign for “thank you” or “I love you” or “finished”, teach them to the children. You can also have the children draw a picture to tell a story or share their feelings. The point is to use examples of non-verbal communication to demonstrate to students that they can let someone else in on what is happening to them sometimes without even using words.*
- *Another way we communicate to tell people something without talking is with signs. What are some signs that send a message everyone understands?*  
*Use the posters provided with the exercise to show the children some common signs such as traffic signs, the sign for restrooms, and for disabled parking spots. Another example of visual signs that communicate is letters and numbers. If you have flash cards available show them to the children and point out that there is a lot that is communicated using letters and numbers in addition to pictures.*
- *Words are, of course, a way we most often “communicate” to share some feeling or story with other people. Who has a favorite song they would like to sing? What about a favorite story? When people in your house or school want you to be quiet, what sound do they make? What sound do people make when something tastes really, really good? When you are happy, do you make a sound? What sound do you make? When you are angry or upset, do you make a sound? What is it?*
- *I am going to read you a short story about communication. When I finish, I want you to tell me what the person who wrote this story wanted to tell us. When the students are talking about the book, make sure they get that the book itself is a form of*

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written communication as well as the letter. Ask the children to think about why people write letters.

Remind the children how important it is to use all these ways of communicating to get the attention of someone when they are upset, confused, or scared. Let them know that they are really good at all kinds of communication and that they have many tools to rely on to make sure they get heard when there is something important to share with the adults in their life.

- God expects us to speak up for ourselves and to tell someone we can trust when something is wrong or upsetting to us. When we let others know about bad or confusing things that happen, we are doing what God wants for us and being how God wants us to be.
- Let's share a prayer as we complete our lesson today to remind us that we are God's special creations.

### Activity #3: Classroom Discussion: Learning when and who to tell

**Directions:** The next question for the students is *who do you tell?*

Ask your students to name some of the adults in their lives who they trust. Next, have them consider the following points to help them figure out who to tell when something like this happens. They should consider telling:

- People who have proven themselves trustworthy in the past.
- People respected and trusted to behave honorably by your family.
- People who listen to you and treat you with respect.
- People who respect your wishes and your parent's rules.
- People who you know have your best interests at heart.

The best choice would be to tell someone who matches all of these points.

It is important for students to begin to confront the challenge of speaking up when something like this happens—regardless of how threatened or uncomfortable they feel. In situations like this, the adult will work very hard to make the victim believe that he or she is responsible and that nobody will believe the child if he or she speaks up.

**Note to Teacher:** Many children believe that when it is their word against that of a teacher or another adult, the adult will always be believed. It is extremely important that you help dispel this myth and help foster an environment where children feel empowered to report this sort of behavior when it first occurs.

### Prayer to end the lesson:

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.

## SIGNS THAT COMMUNICATE



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