

SAFE TOUCH PROGRAM

Lesson, Ages 7th – 8th Grade:

Part 1: Boundaries

Boundaries are rules, like speed limits or rules in the classroom. They help us know what we can or can't do, what is safe or not safe, and when everyone knows them and follows them, then we are all safer. There are three main kinds of boundaries and rules. Boundaries can be physical, emotional or behavioral. Physical boundaries are about who can touch us and where they can touch us. Emotional boundaries are about being close to a person – and what we share with another person. Behavioral boundaries are about what we are willing to do in a given situation, and what we are not willing to do.

Discussion questions:

1. What is an example of a physical boundary? What is an example of an emotional boundary? What is an example of a behavioral boundary?
2. How might you respond to a violation of a physical boundary? An emotional boundary? A behavioral boundary?
3. Have you ever felt a funny, uncomfortable feeling when someone crosses a physical or emotional boundary, or when you cross your own behavioral boundary and you are afraid something bad is going to happen?
4. Let's talk about examples of getting that uncomfortable feeling. What feelings do you get that tell you something is wrong?

Part 2: Safe Touch

One of the gifts God has given us is our ability to receive good feelings when we touch or are touched by others. For example, a mother's touch can comfort a baby when he is in her arms or having a parent or grandparent or good friend put his or her arm around our shoulders when we're upset. People touch people all the time. Some touches are accidental, while some are on purpose. Some touches make us feel good, like hugs from friends and family members. Other touches can make us feel bad or uncomfortable.

Discussion questions:

1. Let's talk about ways or times we have been touched when it made us feel safe and good.
2. Let's talk about ways or times when being touched does not make us feel safe or good.
(*Expect and elicit discussion about non-sexual touches, such as a fight with a friend or sibling.*)

There are parts of our bodies that are private and there are rules or limits for touching those parts of our bodies. People (like a doctor or a nurse) need our parent's permission and our permission to touch us in those places. If someone touches us in those areas without permission, or if they ask us to touch them in those areas, we may get that uncomfortable feeling that tells us something is wrong. If we get that uncomfortable feeling, the responsible choice is to get up and get away. It is important that we tell someone what has happened and how we feel. It is important that we tell, whether the person who touched us is an adult, an older child, or even someone of our own age. It is true whether the person is a stranger or someone we may know.

Sometimes someone touches us and it does not feel uncomfortable, but we're not sure that it is OK. When that happens it's important that we talk to our parents, teacher, or another safe adult about it. If someone tries to give us presents, or asks us to keep a secret or to do something that we know breaks the rules, it's important that we talk to our parents about it.

Being safe, taking care of our bodies and being respectful of them is important to learn. This is especially true because God gives us our bodies and they belong to Him. One of the most important skills for being safe and being respectful involves talking to our parents or another safe adult about situations that we do not understand or where we do not feel OK.

Part 3: Learning to say NO when you feel that uncomfortable feeling

If someone touches you in a private area or does something else that gives us that uncomfortable feeling:

- The first thing you should do is immediately say NO. Stop.
- Second, we should get away from that person immediately, if we don't feel safe.
- The third thing we should do is to go to a safe adult and tell them that we need help. A responsible adult should be told immediately. Tell them what happened and how it made us feel – even if someone has asked us or told us not to tell. We need to keep telling until someone makes it stop.

A safe adult may not be the same person for everyone. It may be a parent, teacher, neighbor or close relative. It is someone who cares about us, will listen to us and can help us with our situation. An unsafe adult is someone who makes us feel uncomfortable or uneasy; asks us to keep secrets or gives us unexpected gifts. He or she may ask for directions, ask for help in finding a lost pet or ask to help them carry something. It is important to know that adults do not need to ask children for help.

Sometimes adolescents have difficulty telling about an uncomfortable incident. This may be because they have trouble finding the right words to say. They may be afraid that their parents will get angry or not believe them. They might also feel like it was somehow their fault. It is still important, however, to find a safe adult and let the adult know what happened.

Discussion questions:

1. We talked about three steps you should take if you get that uncomfortable feeling. What are those steps?
2. *Note: Sometimes people who behave inappropriately tell kids not to tell anyone about it. Talk about what to do if that happens.*

Part 4: Rules to help children be safe

1. Always use the Buddy System and never go places alone. Predators usually focus on kids that are alone.
2. Always let someone know where you are going and with whom you're going to be.
3. Never get into a car or go with a stranger or a person who makes you feel uncomfortable.
4. It's all right to be suspicious of adults who seem to be too friendly. Trust your instincts or feelings when it doesn't feel right.

5. Being safe when you're on the internet is very, very important. Never tell anyone your name, your address or phone number, or the school that you go to while you're online. It is strongly recommended that you only talk to people you know in real life while online. The internet is NOT a safe place to make new friends – you never know who you're really talking to. NEVER agree to meet someone "in real life" who you met first online. If someone online asks you personal questions, says something mean to you or about you, or asks to meet you in person, let your parents know immediately.
6. Tell your parents or another adult that you trust if anyone offers you money or gifts, if someone wants to take your picture and if any adult asks you to keep a secret.
7. No one should ever touch you on parts of your body that are private to you. Nor, if they ask you to, should you ever touch anyone on those parts.
8. If someone threatens you, yell "No" or "Stop" immediately. Screaming and attracting attention is the surest way of scaring someone off.
9. Trust your feelings! If a situation doesn't feel right, leave it and get help if needed.
10. Never keep secrets. If something comes up that seems difficult to handle, tell your parents or a trusted adult. If that person doesn't listen, go to another person who will listen. Keep telling until someone really hears you.
11. Predators use tricks to lure kids. Never go with a stranger, even if they say something like:
 - The stranger has lost his pet and needs your help to find it,
 - The stranger is lost and needs directions,
 - Your mom or dad is hurt or sick and told the stranger to pick you up, or
 - You have won a contest or are invited to a "modeling tryout"

(Note: these are common lures that are used by child abductors.)