

SAFE TOUCH
High School Program Outline – winter 2010

Information for Program Parents:

Program Goals:

1. To provide information at an age-appropriate level to make adolescents aware of the concepts of safe touch vs. inappropriate touch.
2. To stress, in the presentation, the concept that our bodies belong to God and that we must treat them with respect and protect them from harm to the extent we are able.
3. To encourage adolescents to make choices that are most likely to help keep themselves safe and healthy. In some areas of their lives, adolescents are capable of making some decisions that lessen their vulnerability to inappropriate or unsafe touching.
4. To provide information in regard to:
 - having and recognizing good boundaries both in real life and on the internet
 - good touch/bad touch and recognizing how uncomfortable we feel when inappropriate touching occurs
 - how to say NO and be able to get away from bad situations
 - how to report concerns to a safe adult
5. To provide a lesson plan that can be formatted for a one class period discussion.
6. To focus on safety, rather than on sexuality.

Please Note:

This program is designated to help adolescents identify situations or events that do not feel safe to them. Many times adolescents (and even adults) fail to recognize the danger of being in situations with someone who is not being appropriate, because they fail to listen to their own sense of what is wrong. This is why this program is strongly focused on helping adolescents to recognize events and feelings that alert them to situations that may not be right.

This program is not intended to evoke a discussion about abuse that a student has experienced. If, during your discussion with your students, a student reports or begins to talk about an abusive situation, explain that you would like to continue this discussion with them but will do so after class. It is required that, if a student reports abuse, you immediately bring this to the attention of your administrator.

This program is also not intended as sex education. Teachers of the program should feel free to stop any comments from students that are inappropriate for the context of this program and redirect the students toward the program content, which focuses on safety, rather than sexuality.

High School Lesson Plan:

While you are presenting the Safe Touch program, keep in mind what we have learned in the Protecting God's Children program – that the grooming process involves teaching teens not to notice or follow the boundaries. Think of examples of how that might look, like an adult giving them presents, asking them to keep a secret from their parents or giving them a back rub, etc.]

Introduction:

Parent shares: Today, we are going to discuss some topics – safe touch and personal body safety – that can be difficult or even uncomfortable to discuss at times. But it is an important topic, and we are going to have a serious discussion about it.

Many teens mistakenly believe that they are not at risk for being sexually abused, assaulted, or mistreated. This is a mistake. In fact, of all child sexual abuse cases that are proven in our country, 46% are toward adolescents. And adolescents are far more likely to be mistreated this way by a relative, friend, or someone else they know than by a stranger.

Part I: Boundaries

Parent shares: Our discussion of safety starts with understanding boundaries. Boundaries are personal rules. Boundaries are limits. They help us know what we can or can't do, what is safe or not safe, and when everyone follows good boundaries, 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 our bodies and physical touch. For example, you might hug or slap on the back certain friends when you see them, but not others.

Emotional boundaries are about being close to a person – and what we share or don't share with other people. For example, some people choose to post a lot of personal information online, while others choose to keep that information private.

Behavioral boundaries are about what we are willing to do or not do in any given situation. For example, do you come home by curfew or miss curfew and risk the consequences?

When someone tries to cross our boundaries, or get us to compromise on our own boundaries, this gives us a feeling in our gut. Our gut instinct tells us that something isn't right. It is

important to TRUST that gut instinct! Too often, we can be too trusting of others, even when they haven't earned that trust. Instead, trust your own instinct when it feels like something just isn't right or safe in a situation. If we listen to ourselves, our bodies will tell us when we are at risk.

Discussion questions:

1. What is an example of a physical boundary? An emotional boundary? A behavioral boundary? (Parent: be prepared to offer non-sexual examples of each. For example, a physical boundary could be how close you stand to other people while you're in a line. An emotional boundary could be what you're willing to share with a friend who you know can't keep secrets. And a behavioral boundary might be whether or not you're willing to cheat on a test.)
2. When someone tries to cross your boundaries, how does it make you feel? In other words, how does your body tell you when you are uncomfortable, nervous, worried, or angry about someone else's behavior?

Part 2: Safe Touch Issues for Adolescents

Parent shares: One serious personal boundary is the issue of the private parts of our bodies. People (like doctors or nurses) need our parent's permission and our permission to touch or see the parts of our bodies that are private. It is important to remember that God made us in God's image, and so we need to respect our bodies and ourselves. Adolescents face several serious concerns with this issue.

1. The first concern involves adults who try to cross boundaries with teenagers. It is OK to say no to an adult who tries to be inappropriate with you physically or behaviorally. No adult – including relatives, friends, neighbors, adults at church and adults at school – has the right to touch you on private areas of your body or pressure you into inappropriate behavior. It is never appropriate for adults to have dating relationships with adolescents. As said before, teens sometime believe that only younger children can experience this type of abuse by adults. Actually, however, teens are at increased, not decreased, risk for this type of abuse.

Be aware that adults who try to cross boundaries with children or teens will not usually begin with physical touching. Instead, they often begin by trying to earn the young person's trust and even the trust of the young person's family. They can do things like telling the teen secrets, giving gifts, showing the teen inappropriate photos or materials, and even providing the teen alcohol. When an adult's behavior gives you that gut instinct that something just isn't right, trust your instinct.

2. Another modern issue involves technology. In today's culture, there is often pressure to make very poor decisions while online. In order to protect your personal safety, your reputation, and your future opportunities, it is important to show safe and reasonable judgment online. Suggestions include:

- Don't post or send inappropriate photos of yourself or others. This includes photos of the private parts of people's bodies. Today, teens are beginning to be charged with distributing child pornography for spreading these types of photos.
- Don't post or Twitter your location. There is a danger in letting the online world know where you are all the time.
- Don't post/blog inappropriately about your personal experiences. You can put yourself in physical and legal risk.
- Don't meet anyone in real life who you first come in contact with online – ever.

3. A final issue today involves safety with friends and dating partners. Too often in today's culture, some people who are looking for emotional closeness substitute physical behavior instead. However, teens that date can make smart choices that help them to live their own values as well as protect themselves from dating partners who may not respect their boundaries. These smart choices include:

- Stay sober and aware while out with a date or friends. Statistics show that in the majority of date assaults, alcohol is involved.
- Don't go out alone with a dating partner until you know him or her better.
- Be mindful of your location and don't go to secluded areas. This includes houses where parents aren't home and vehicles in parking lots.
- When you're at a party, keep your beverage with you, in order to reduce the chances of being drugged without your knowledge. If you have set down your drink or not kept watch over it, get a new glass and pour out the old one.

Remember though: even a person who has made a mistake in judgment deserves to be safe and does not deserve to be mistreated. You always have the right to say "no." You don't have to go along when someone is pressuring you to cross your boundaries. This is true even if you have crossed those boundaries before.

Discussion questions:

1. Who can remember one or more of the tips for online personal safety?
2. Who can remember one or more of the tips for dating safety? (*Parent: allow students to share what they remember about the tips, so long as their comments remain appropriate. Move on to the remainder of the program if their answers become inappropriate.*)

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

Parent shares:

When someone crosses a boundary with us, whether it is in person or online, our body and our instinct will often tell us that something is wrong. It is important that we trust our instinct and take action when someone is trying to cross our boundaries. If someone touches you inappropriately or does anything else that gives you a gut instinct that something isn't right:

- The first thing you should do is immediately say “NO” or “Stop.” Use eye contact and use a firm and clear voice. Be clear that you are serious.
- Second, get away from that person immediately, if you don't feel safe.
- Last, tell a safe adult about what happened. Tell even if someone asked or told you not to tell. Keep telling until someone believes you, takes you seriously, and takes action to keep you safe in the future.

A “safe adult” may not be the same person for everyone. It may be a parent, teacher, school counselor, or close relative. It is someone who cares about you, will listen to you and can help you with your situation.

* It is important to tell a safe adult, whether the person who crossed your boundaries is an adult, an older adolescent, or even someone of our own age.

* This is also true whether the person is a stranger or someone we may know. Statistically, over 90% of young people who are sexually mistreated knew the person who mistreated them.

Sometimes, adolescents have difficulty telling an adult about an uncomfortable incident. This may be because:

- they don't want to get in trouble or get the other person in trouble
- they are ashamed of their own behavior or choices
- the person who mistreated them told them or threatened them not to tell anyone
- they are afraid they won't be believed or don't know who to tell
- they believe what happened to them “wasn't a big deal” or is a normal part of life, or
- they might also feel like it was somehow their fault.

However, it is still important to tell a safe adult. This is because young people who have been physically or sexually mistreated will experience an emotional or physical affect. Sometimes this affect can even be years after the incident or abuse. It can be hard to have healthy and happy relationships later in life, after having experienced your boundaries being disrespected. There is also the possibility that the person who mistreats one person may go on to do the same behaviors to others. By telling, you may be saving another person from experiencing such a difficult situation.

Discussion questions (teaching strategies):

1. We talked about three steps you should take if your instinct tells you that you are at risk. What are those steps?

Conclusion:

While this topic is not an easy one to discuss, it is important. Please remember – you can trust your instinct that something isn't right or isn't safe about a situation, and you can tell an adult you trust, if someone has touched you or treated you inappropriately. (*Parent: provide handout to students and answer any appropriate questions they may ask.*)

Rules to Help Teens Stay Safe
Handout for Students - Safe Touch Program

1. Always use the Buddy System and never go places alone. Unsafe adults usually focus on teens that are alone. If someone threatens you, yell “No” or “Stop” immediately. Screaming and attracting attention is the surest way of scaring someone off.

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 any person who makes you feel uncomfortable. Be aware: predators use tricks to lure teens. Never go with a stranger, even if they say something like you have won a contest or are invited to a "modeling tryout." Those are common lures to get teens to leave the mall with predators.
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. 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. Safe adults do not ask adolescents (whom they don't know personally) for help or directions.
5. No adult should ever touch you inappropriately. Inappropriate behavior could include talking about their private body areas, showing inappropriate or pornographic photos, or asking you about your body.
6. Being safe when you're online is very important. Never tell anyone your name, address, phone number, team, school, or any other identifying information while you're online. When you post or send information online, remember that anyone can read it, not just your friends. Do not upload, send or post any comments or photos that are inappropriate.
7. 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. Some unsafe adults pretend to be teens online, in order to trick teens into giving out their personal information. NEVER agree to meet someone "in real life" who you met first online. If you go on sites like Facebook, you should only communicate online with people you know in real life. Never "friend" someone online whom you don't personally know in real life.
8. 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 and makes sure you're safe.
9. Develop a family password for emergencies. Do not go with adults who claim that your parent is hurt or sick, unless they know your family password.
10. Trust your feelings! If a situation doesn't feel right, leave it and get help if needed.