

Teaching Touching Safety

TO: Parents/Guardians
SUBJECT: OPT OUT Form for St. Mary Help of Christians
DATE: Fall 2020

St. Mary Help of Christians will present a sexual abuse prevention program, *Teaching Touching Safety*, to our students on Saturday, October 17, AD 2020, at 10:00 AM with a make-up date of Wednesday, October 21, AD 2020 at 6:30 PM. The program will take about an hour. Parents are invited to attend with their child. Please bring your child to St. Angela Hall for the program; different age groups will then move to other rooms. This program is provided to us by the Diocese of Charleston and is a part of our ongoing effort to help create and maintain safe environments for all children and youth in our care.

The scheduled lesson is being offered to all students at St. Mary Help of Christians parish and school. As parents, you have the right to choose whether your student participates in the program. We encourage you to read the overview of the program, attached. If you would like more details, contact Mary Ellen Jackson at mjackson@charlestdiocese.org.

It is important to note, this is basic prevention education and is in no way to be considered sex education or education on private body parts. Neither of these components fall within our educational mandate to provide your child with the information needed to keep them safe from those who would do them harm.

If you wish to “opt” your child out of the prevention education session, please complete the “opt-out” form at the bottom of this page and return it to your child’s teacher no later than September 15th.

There is also the option to do this program at home with your child; please contact me if you would like to take advantage of that option, and I will send you that information. mjackson@charlestdiocese.org

Opt-out form for use with the Teaching Touching Safety Program:

St. Mary Help of Christians does not have my permission to present the Teaching Touching Safety program, to my child/children:

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____. | 3. _____. |
| 2. _____. | 4. _____. |

Parent’s Name (printed) _____.

Parent’s Signature _____.

Date: _____.

Lesson 4 for Grades K, 1 & 2

Secrets, Surprises and Promises

PRINCIPLE

Children must learn how to respect their own health and safety, and that of others, by understanding the safety rules about secrets. They have a right to be safe, and they are allowed to create boundaries to protect themselves in situations that cause discomfort or violate the safety rules.

CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE

“Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.”
—Jeremiah 1:8, New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV)

OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, the adult lesson leader reinforces the parent's message about boundaries. After Lesson 4, children should be better able to:

- Identify the boundary differences between secrets, surprises and promises
- Understand the safety rules with regard to secrets and promises:
 - Say “No!” when someone tries to make you keep a secret regarding safety
 - Try to leave the situation if you feel uncomfortable
 - Tell a safe adult as soon as possible (even if it didn't happen to you)
- Technology component: Understand similar boundary rules apply for Online activities, too
- Begin to understand that if anybody does make them keep a secret, gives them an unsafe touch or shows them inappropriate material, it isn't the child's fault

Background for Lesson Leaders:

Before beginning this session, the Lesson Leader should read the *Teaching Boundary and Safety Guide*, as it gives a wealth of information regarding boundaries and how to address them.

While adults are the chief protectors of children, there are still ways we can teach children to better protect themselves when faced with tough situations. Personal boundaries are established during our early years, and adults must help children to create their own proper boundaries and respect the ones that are in place—understanding that children will model adult behavior. Some boundaries are “non-negotiables” for children (such as touching/physical boundaries), but others are unique and are impacted based on the youth's individual perceptions, personal history, values, goals, culture and concerns.

Using our voice, and the word “no” are effective ways to establish a boundary. Sometimes children may not be aware they're allowed to say “no” to an adult or older youth.

Most people will accept and respect our boundaries if we are clear about them. But, with some people, we must frequently and clearly uphold and reset our boundaries.

Children may have difficulty with this concept at this age. They can see boundaries in a very literal and visual way (such as a fence around a yard), but they can also learn that words create boundaries. One boundary is created if, for example, a child says, “I don't need any help. I can do it myself.” Some other words and phrases that can create boundaries for children are “no,” “don't do that,” “give me five” (instead of a hug), and “leave me alone.” Obviously, when you think about it, there are many examples of using words to create boundaries. By using as many examples as possible, you can help young children begin to develop an understanding of the more abstract meaning of the term boundary—and, obviously, that abstract meaning is most germane to helping children learn to protect themselves from sexual abuse.

This age group: Dealing with the primary age—key concept is “activity”

Young children have lively and vivid imaginations, are growing less self-centered, and are 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, and safe versus unsafe behavior—but they do understand “rules”, which is another phrase for boundaries. At this age, children are beginning to differentiate between the positive and negative aspects of everyday life. They are beginning to question adults' expectations of blind obedience. At the same time, they are learning how to respect and care for their own bodies in terms of hygiene, eating, and activity. Parents and caring adults should make every effort to create an environment with honesty and trust, where children are free to ask questions about life and their own bodies to set the stage for each child's life-long relationships with others. This is the time to discuss safe and unsafe behaviors, and to enable children to practice safety away from home.

Lesson 4 for Grades 3—5

Secrets, Surprises and Promises

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CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE

“Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.”
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- Technology component: Understand similar boundary rules apply for online activities, too
- Begin to understand that if anybody does make them keep a secret, gives them an unsafe touch or shows them inappropriate material, it isn't the child's fault

Background for Lesson Leaders:

Before beginning this session, the Lesson Leader should read the *Teaching Boundary and Safety Guide*, as it gives a wealth of information regarding boundaries and how to address them.

By this age, children should already know the names of their private parts as communicated by their parents. The Lesson Leader should not teach children the names of their private parts, but can explain that the areas covered by bathing suits are our “private parts” and are kept covered and private for a reason—to keep us safe and healthy. Also, the word “no” is an extremely powerful word in every language. Using our voice, and the word “no” are effective ways to establish a boundary. Sometimes children may not be aware that they're allowed to say “no” to adults.

The best approach to working with this age group is through non-competitive games in which the children can establish individual goals. At this age, more explanation is necessary when rules are given. Children need to begin to learn to trust their own ability to make decisions. Therefore, criticism should be designed to teach. For example, when something goes wrong or does not turn out as planned, rather than tell the child what went wrong, ask, “Next time, how could you do that differently so you would have a better outcome?” Let the child begin to think through the process and develop possible solutions.

This age group: Dealing with the primary age—key concept is “energy”

This age group is learning how to function independently of their parents. They know how to read and their comprehension levels are giving them a better sense of abstract ideas. Their writing skills are better as they learn proper grammar / punctuation, and become more refined with communicating their ideas.

Children of this age are away from home more often than earlier in life and need to start recognizing that safety issues can arise when they are off with friends, under the supervision of a 3rd party, or at other events / locations. They like to be in constant motion and are always on the go. Groups are important. This is the “gang” age with friends of the same sex. Capable of intense loyalty to others, they usually have a best friend in which to confide. Although truthful about big things, they are less so about the smaller things, often making up alibis or shifting the blame to others. They have a strong sense of right / wrong, fair / unfair and are more able to discern the difference between safe / unsafe. They are able to use logic, can argue and hold strong debates. The difficulty in dealing with boundaries with this age group is that these children are moving from dependence toward independence. Ultimately, we all must learn to listen to that guiding voice inside our head and to trust “that uneasy feeling in our gut.” That little voice or uneasy feeling is a warning sign that something is wrong. Telling them “the rules” will not be enough. Children of this age need to learn to reason it out for themselves. The adults involved are primarily concerned with safety issues that the children don't seem to be able to see clearly—at least not yet. Caregivers can be more effective when dealing with this age by including them in the discussion while establishing rules or guidelines.