

VIRTUS Touching Safety – Eighth Grade

Learning About Grooming: Recognizing Risky Adult Behavior

Teachers are to review the Touching Safety guidelines from VIRTUS and the lesson plan guidelines before the class session. Parish catechetical leaders are to make sure that parents or guardians have been advised of their right to have their child opt out of this class session.

Recording Form Due Date:

March 31 of every calendar year

Length of class session: 45-60 minutes

This lesson plan may have more activities than can be included in your 40-60 minute session. Please feel free to choose which activities your class will connect with the best and drop any activities that you think your class would not connect with. Catechists should include opening and closing prayer. They should also include Scripture component and review Religious Education Standards for their correlation with the VIRTUS activities.

Educator Resources:

Archdiocesan Religious Education Tasks, *Essential Concepts*, and Standards: By the end of the session the youth will be able to:

Task I: Knowledge of the Faith

- *Sacred Scripture*
 - Read and become familiar with selected passages from the Acts of the Apostles, the Letters, and Revelation.

Task III: Moral Formation

- *Made in the Image of God: Foundation of Human Dignity*
 - Explain why being made in the image and likeness of God is the foundation of human dignity.
- *Human Freedom and Conscience Formation*
 - Participate in moral decision-making role play that includes use of Scripture and Church teachings on morality and objective truth that we can use to guide our choices across different context and situations.
- *The Human Community*
 - Discuss how some Saints demonstrated the common good and gave of themselves to serve others.

Task IV: Learning to Pray

- Explore, experience, and reflect on the various expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative; and contemplative.
- Use Scripture passages for *Lectio Divina*.

Task V: Education for Community Life

- *Models of the Catholic Church: Temples of the Holy Spirit*
 - Describe the benefits of chastity/chaste living with maintaining our bodies as Temples of the Holy Spirit.

Teaching Safety Course Objectives: By the end of the session the youth will be able to:

- Clearly state the rules about inappropriate touching.
- Describe safe touches.
- Say “No!” when someone tries to touch them in a way that is uncomfortable or otherwise inappropriate.
- Identify the situations when secrets are appropriate and when secrets are a threat of harm.
- Name their safe friends and safe adults.
- Identify special safe adults.
- Respond in an appropriate manner to unsafe situations.

Note to Catechist: The introductory video for grades 6 through 8 is designed to open a simple discussion with youth about touching safety and personal boundaries. The video is approximately six (8) minutes long and is neither created nor intended as a substitute for the lesson itself. It is merely an introduction designed to “break the ice” among those in this age group and to get everyone talking about the relevant personal boundary and personal safety issues. Importantly, the video will get children focused on the topic matter, which will help the catechist to facilitate an easy transition into the interactive activities within the lesson. These interactive activities are the critical components where children have a real opportunity to learn how to protect themselves.

We recommend that you watch the video in advance at least a couple of times prior to showing it to your students, so you’ll be able to more easily anticipate when the video will end. The video really needs no introduction. Just put it into the machine, and hit “play.” If you’re using a DVD version of the video, you’ll select the English or Spanish version and the appropriate age group from a menu screen. If you’re using a link, you will need to select the appropriate link and click play.

In preparing for this activity, review *Teaching Boundaries and Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Other Caring Adults*. **Help children to see that they have a say in what happens to their bodies.**

English Link: <https://seattlearch.box.com/shared/static/q5odkngf74wbaestvebvysldqd2cp9fe.pdf>

Spanish Link: <https://seattlearch.box.com/shared/static/6j4th0n2h11sfo75o4kj0xe2l2ismv1n.pdf>

This age group: Dealing with pre-adolescents and adolescents—key concept is “transition”

The middle school child is experiencing a period of rapid growth. The emergence of interest in the opposite sex is occurring. He / she is often concerned about physical change, body size, skin quality and hair length. Body image is very important to this age as he / she complains of being either too physically mature or immature—and may also complain that they do not have enough privacy. The peer group plays an import role in shaping attitudes and interest. Caregivers need to regularly assure youngsters that changes are normal, though the rate of change varies from person to person.

Lesson leaders must carefully listen to youth and observe what is happening in their lives. Let young people be themselves. Let them explore their self-expression; but, know who they are with and what they are doing, and remind them of the importance of protecting themselves during this dynamic time in their lives. During this time, youth are completely self-absorbed, and many are naturally less communicative than at other periods during their development. This is the point that more trust will be given to the youth to evaluate safe and unsafe situations when they are not in the care of their parents or guardians.

Vocabulary words and definitions: (NOTE - This list is designed to help the catechist explain relevant terms. It includes more terms than the students are expected to know).

Boundaries – the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others.

Chastity – a virtue that allows us to do what is right and good in the areas of relationship and sexuality.

Conscience – our inner voice from God telling us right from wrong (CCC #1777-1778)

Consequences – the results of our actions; what happens from the things we say and do

Evil – the opposite or absence of good (CCC #309-311, 385, 1707)

Free Will – the freedom and ability to choose (CCC #1730-1739)

Intellect – our mind, our ability to think

Holy – close to God; filled with God's grace

Holy Spirit - the third Person of the Trinity; the Spirit of God. (CCC #685; 152; 243)

Human Dignity – The belief that all people are created in God's image and worthy of honor or respect

Lectio Divina – Divine reading of Sacred Scripture using silence, reflection, and meditation

Moral life – choosing to act with goodness

"No!" or other words and phrases that mean, "No!"—a child needs to know that any time someone tries to touch his or her private body parts or tries to get the child to touch the private body parts of the other person, the youth should say words that mean "No," run away, and then should tell their mother or father or another safe adult as soon as possible.

Objective Truth – a teaching that is true across all cultures and times, even if not all people recognize it is true, e.g. the sanctity of life.

Peer Pressure – the strong influence of a group—especially of young people—on members of that group to behave as everyone else does.

Pornography – the printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings.

Private Body Parts – those body parts covered by a bathing suit

Right – what we are allowed to do

Respect – want only the best for other people and do good things for us

Rules – tell us what we can and cannot do

Sacred – holy and special to God

Safe (trusted) friend/ safe adult/ safe touch – people who respect our wishes and the rules of our parents or guardians; they won't hurt or scare us without a good reason, such as a nurse who gives us a shot

Secret – something kept hidden or unexplained

Sin - choosing to disobey God. It is doing what you know is wrong. (CCC #1849; 1853)

Special safe adult – our parents or guardians, doctor or nurse – are those very special adults who can see or touch our private body parts, but only to keep us clean and healthy and only when we are sick or need help

Soul – where God lives within us

Spontaneous Prayer – writing or saying a prayer to God using the "You, Who, Do, Through" formula

Stewardship – taking care of God's creation, such as our bodies that God has created

Temple of the Holy Spirit – At baptism, the Holy Spirit comes to live in our bodies and souls to nourish, heal, guide, and protect us (CCC 739, 809-810)

Ten Commandments – rules from God that help keep us safe and respect others

Touching Rules: "If someone tries to touch a child's body parts or wants the child to touch their **private body parts**, the child should..."

- Say, "No!"
- Run away.
- Tell a parents or guardian or other safe adult what happened.

Touching safety – knowing how to protect our bodies from those who might want to hurt us

Unsafe friend/ unsafe adult/ unsafe touch – people who do not respect our wishes and the rules of our parents or guardians; they could hurt us

Virtuous – making a habit of choosing to do the good and right thing

Lesson Plan:

Resources:

Catholic Youth Bibles (Bible open to the passage of 1Corinthians 3:16-17)

Teaching Safety introduction DVD for Grades 6-8 or provided YouTube link.

English: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/P3RoYAYkDQ4>

Spanish: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/XBN8gsD8A7U>

White board, chalk board, or easel and paper

- Welcome the students. Tell them that in today's session we will be talking about how God made each of us in his image and likeness. Did you know that God calls our bodies "**Temples of the Holy Spirit**"? That means that God made us good and **holy**. Because we are good and holy, God wants us to learn how to **respect** and to take care of our bodies by following **safety rules** and knowing how to protect ourselves and thus, we have the **right** to say "No" to people who make us feel uncomfortable.
- Opening prayer that includes scripture and begins and ends with the Sign of the Cross.
 - All: + **In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**
 - Catechist: A Reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians... (*read verse 3:16-17*). Short pause. Explain to the students that God, the Holy Spirit, lives in their bodies. Discuss how their bodies are temples, holy (**sacred**) places, like our Churches. Thus, all of our body parts are special and holy (sacred). God wants us to take care of them by following **rules** to keep them safe, healthy, and holy. God also wants to protect us and that means we need to know when to say "No!" to people who might want to hurt us.
 - Review **relevant** vocabulary words, including:
 - **Peer Pressure**—the strong influence of a group—especially of young people—on members of that group to behave as everyone else does.
 - **Private body parts**—those body parts covered by a bathing suit.
 - **Boundaries**—the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. Boundaries promote and preserve personal integrity. Boundaries give each person a clear sense of "self" and a framework for how to function in relation to others. Boundaries bring order to our lives and empower each of us to determine how others will interact with us.
 - **Uncomfortable** – experiencing physical discomfort that leaves one ill at ease, or uneasy, sometimes causing anxiety.
 - **Confusing** – to cause to be unable to think clearly, to make unclear or incomprehensible.
 - **Secrets** – Something that is hidden from others or that is known only to one or to a few.
 - **Secluded** – Kept apart from social contact with other people, hidden from view.
 - Catechist tells students, please bow your heads and make the Sign of the Cross, as we pray... *Dear God, you made each of us in your image, as good and wonderful. Because we are Temples of the Holy Spirit, you want us to always take care of ourselves and to be with others, who want to keep us safe and holy. Help us to learn the safety rules, so that we can respect ourselves and each other. Thank you for the gifts of Jesus, our parents or guardians, and our catechists, who help us to learn and follow your rules through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

- All: + **In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Show the introductory video (7 ½ minutes).

Activity #1: Review and Expand the Touching Safety Rules

Directions: In preparing for this activity, review *Teaching Touching Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Other Caring Adults*. Then, discuss the fact that a child has a right to say “No,” and to expect the other person to listen and respect the “No.”

Note: These exercises are intended to empower young people to begin to think about safety issues and to be their parents’ or guardians’ partner in making sure that the child has the tools needed to resist the overtures of a potential child molester.

Reviewing the touching rules and violations

- “If someone tries to touch a person’s body parts or wants the child to touch their **private body parts**, the person should...”
 - Say, “No!”
 - Run away.
 - Tell a parent, guardian or another safe adult what happened.

Talk with students about risky situations they might face with adults and other young people and discuss appropriate ways to respond. Remember that youth of this age are dealing with enormous peer pressure while trying to understand their independent role in the world apart from their families. It is not always “cool” to say that you must tell someone if you are touched or approached in an inappropriate or sexual way. So, **do your best to stress the importance of good communication while speaking to the adolescent in a way that has him or her actually hear you, rather than ignore you.**

Discuss situations that could be a part of a grooming process.

As you look at the situations, you will see that none of them are clear-cut examples of grooming. Discussion allows the young people to work out the issues involved in determining whether the adult’s actions are part of the grooming process. It is important that young people begin to recognize the elements of grooming and identify things that are “red flags.”

- Adults or older youth who allow young people to watch R-rated or X-rated movies. (In the first situation, the mere fact that an adult allows a child to watch an R-Rated movie is not necessarily grooming. However, if the movie is one the parents or guardians have forbidden the child to see and the adult tells the child to keep it a secret, the adult’s action become more suspicious.)
- Adults or other youth who tell dirty jokes or look at “adult” (naked or sexually explicit) pictures.
- An adult or older child who does something unsafe and, when the young person says, “Stop,” the adult or older child agrees to back off but asks the child not to tell anyone what happened.
- A friend confides in you that someone has molested him or her or has done some things that make the friend uncomfortable with the other person.
- You are at a friend’s house. The parents or guardians are gone and your friend wants the two of you to get into the liquor cabinet for some “refreshments.”

Discuss difficult situations that encourage the young people to look carefully at challenges that might arise and think through the issues to come to a safe and healthy decision. This is an excellent opportunity for young people to begin to confront the challenge of doing the right thing in the face of

peer pressure and the child's real need to "fit in" and be part of the group. It also offers reflection on the Catholic teachings on human dignity, moral decision-making, and respect of our bodies.

Activity #2: Discussion of Gifts and Their Implications.

Note to the Youth Leader: This discussion is designed in a way that allows the youth to speak about this issue conceptually rather than from personal experience. They do not have to share what has potentially happened to them, but can draw on their own experiences and their own observations. They can use the discussion questions to begin to distinguish between gift giving that is an expression of pure, wholesome love and friendship and gift giving that is a tool used by people whose intention is to do harm.

Leader Script with leading questions and discussion points. Please feel free to use this as a foundation for your discussion and do not feel obligated to use the script verbatim or in its entirety.

Leader: Today we are going to have a conversation and 'gifts.' When we talk about 'gifts' what do you think we mean?

- Let the group discuss. Encourage them to think beyond wrapped gifts from friends and family at Christmas and Birthdays.

Leader: "It seems ridiculous to even ask that question, doesn't it? However, a gift is something more than a package wrapped in pretty paper or a bag filled with goodies. The dictionary defines a 'gift' as: 'something that is bestowed voluntarily and without compensation.' It also defines 'bestow' as presenting or conferring something. What does the phrase 'without compensation' mean?

- Let the group discuss.

Leader: 'Without compensation' means that you did not have to pay for it. It also means a great deal more than just payment with money. It means that nothing is expected in return. If there are conditions or expectations, it is not really a gift.

On that note, if a gift is something that is given, or presented, to us and nothing is expected in return, what else would you consider to be a gift?

- Let the group discuss.
- Points to make
 - Sometimes gifts can be expensive and sometimes they can be simple
 - Sometimes gifts are not things, but actions.
 - It is the intention behind the giving of the gift that must be clarified.
 - Gifts from family members and friends that recognize a special occasion or an acknowledgement of accomplishments are great and should be cherished and appreciated. However, these gifts are never given in secret or on the condition that parents or guardians are kept in the dark.

Leader: What are some reasons that people – other than parents, guardians or family members, give gifts?

- Let the group discuss.
- Points to make:
 - Special occasions – these would usually be given in public in front of family members
 - In recognition of an acknowledgement such as graduation or winning a scholarship or competition.

- Sometimes people give gifts in order to get something back from you. Remember, these gifts come with conditions, spoken or not, and so are not true gifts.

Leader: What about people who give gifts and tell you to keep it a secret?

- Let the group discuss.
- Points to make:
 - Sometimes grandparents or other extended family members give gifts and tell the children/youth to keep it a secret. Please reinforce that this is wrong even if the child/youth is afraid that if they tell their parent or guardian they will be asked to give the gift back.
 - If the criteria for determining whether something is a gift is that it is freely given without the expectation of anything in return, then this is not a gift. Keeping it a secret from your parents or guardians is what is expected in return. In the overall scheme of things, it may not seem like a big deal to keep a secret from your parents or guardians about a gift from a friend or family member.
 - Deliberately keeping things from your parents or guardians puts distance between you and them. Distance is like a wall or a barrier that comes between you and someone else all because of some secret you are keeping that you know your parents or guardians would want to know.

Leader: Why would someone do that?

- Let the group discuss.
- Points to make:
 - Sometimes grandparents are frustrated by parents or guardians' rules about gifts. Or they realize that they are going overboard and want to keep from making the parents or guardians mad.
 - Other times people use this as a way to come between you and your parents or guardians or to manipulate and control you. They do this to lure you into doing something that you really don't want to do, something that you don't feel comfortable doing, or something that your parents or guardians would not approve of.

Leader: What would be a 'good' purpose or intention for someone asking that you keep a gift secret from parents or guardians and what other purposes might someone have for making that request?

- Let the group discuss.
- Note: It is important that this discussion clarify the difference between gifts that are appropriate expressions of love and friendship and those that are tools for manipulation and control.
- Points to make:
 - Distinction to make – Someone who lets you do things that your parents or guardians would not allow you to do without their permission or someone who gives you gifts that your parents or guardians do not know about is not a friend. Their interests are not the same as yours and their actions should always be suspect. Even if it may seem harmless to you, even if you just disagreed with your parents or guardians about the issue and are still angry with them about it. The intentions of the adult, or other youth, involved may be very different than you think.
 - Safe adults and safe friends are those that respect your wishes and boundaries and respect the rules and boundaries of your parents, guardians, or caretakers set.
 - When someone suggests that you can do something that you think your parents or guardians would not allow or accept a gift that you are unsure about, tell the person that

you need to call and check in with your parents or guardians. It is best to steer clear of that person., If the adult, or other youth, objects and tries to talk you out of making that call, or leaves you with the idea that it can just be your own 'little secret',

Leader: How does it make you feel when your friends, people you trust, or your parents or guardians keep secrets from you?

- Let the group discuss.
- Points to make:
 - It may not seem like a big deal but you think about how it makes you feel when your friends keep a secret from you. It makes you feel like an outsider and it hurts your feelings. This happens with your parents or guardians when you keep secrets from them. They feel like outsiders and it hurts their feelings.
 - Keeping secrets about things that you know your parents or guardians would want to know creates distance between you and them.

Leader: What do you do when someone, a friend or someone you trusted in the past, asks you to keep a secret from your parents or guardians that you know you should not keep?

- Let the group discuss.
- Points to make:
 - People who say that they are your friends and then expect you to do things to prove your friendship or loyalty are not friends.
 - No matter how tempting it is to go against the rules of the family or your parents or guardian's wishes, the risk of harm to yourself is great. Along with God, the people who love you the most and want what is best for you are your parents or guardians.
 - Sometimes it is hard to talk with parents or guardians about something like this because the adult whose behavior is questionable is a friend of their or, worse still, a relative. Perhaps it is difficult because you know that your parents or guardians will be upset and you don't want to cause that. If that is the case and you don't feel you can talk with your parents or guardians about what is happening, go to another adult whom you trust for advice and support.

Leader: What would you say is the most important message for you to remember from this discussion?

- Let the group discuss.
- Note: Using a chalk board, white board, or easel and paper, make a list of these things they learned during the discussion.

Activity #3: When to Go and When to Say NO.

Note to the presenter: The purpose of this conversation is to begin to expand the discussion about the touching rules to the grooming process. It is important to empower young people to put a stop to activities that place them in harm's way before there is an opportunity for the harm to occur. One of the ways they can protect themselves is to think before they act or, more accurately, think of the possible risks before they go somewhere with someone and put themselves in a dangerous or risky situation.

Presenter Script with leading questions and discussion points. Please feel free to use this as a foundation for your discussion and do not feel obligated to use the script verbatim or in its entirety.

Presenter: In lessons that you received last year or in your school, you have been instructed to that it is your right to speak up and tell a trusted adult when someone harms you or touches you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable.

In today's discussion we will review some of that material, but our primary focus is going to be on establishing some guidelines for you that are more likely to protect you from finding yourself in a compromising, risking, or dangerous situation.

What if someone you think has earned your trust invites you to go somewhere or asks you to do something that makes you feel uneasy or uncomfortable?"

- Let the group discuss.
- Points to make:
 - If the choice is between trusting your instincts and trusting another person – Trust Your Own Instincts.
 - The criteria of trustworthy adults and other are"
 - They do nothing that scares, confuses, or hurts you without good reason (i.e. a nurse gives a shot or a dentist fixing a problem tooth.)
 - They honor your boundaries and the rules set by your parents or guardians.
 - Trustworthy adults are people that listen to you and treat you with respect. They are people that respect your wishes and the limits set by your parents or guardians. Trustworthy adults would not ask you to do something that makes you feel uneasy of that could put you at odds with your Catholic values, your principals, or your parents or guardians.
 - Ask yourself whether this person has your best interests at heart. If you are not completely convinced about this and totally comfortable with the request or the invitation, say "no thanks."

Presenter: How will you handle a situation like this? What will you say? What will you do? Who will you tell – if anyone?

- Let the group discuss.
- Points to make:
 - Remember that you have the right to say 'no' and that anyone who does not respect that right is not really a friend.
 - If you do not feel you can decline to go, invite other young people or better yet another adult to go with you. Make sure that you are not in a position of being alone in a secluded area with an adult who invited you there or insisted that you go there.
 - If you are leaving the area with this person, tell everyone you see. Let them know where you are going and who you are with.
 - If there are no others around, call someone on your cell phone and let them know what's happening,
 - Remember that if the person has no ulterior or harmful motives or bad intentions, they will not be upset by your desire to let people know what is happening or to invite others to join you.
 - If you don't feel comfortable, there is no reason that they adult can give you that should override your own discomfort about the situation. Trust yourself.

Activity #4: Identifying Safe Touch through Bible Stories (Acts and Letters)

Directions:

Have the students read and then role-play the story of Peter healing the lame man (Acts 3:1-10). Have the session answer the following questions:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Who was involved?
3. Why is this a story about safe or unsafe touch? Were the safety rules followed?
4. Can you think of other stories where a saint healed someone? How can stories of miraculous healings show God's love for all of us?

Explain to the students how being made in the image and likeness of God is the foundation of our human dignity. This calls us to respect both our bodies and those of others, as we are Temples of the Holy Spirit.

Have the students break into small groups to read the following passages:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Ask each small group to discuss the relationship between being Temples of the Holy Spirit and the importance of following the touching safety rules. Have small groups share their responses with the full session.

Have students choose one of the passages from 1 Corinthians for *Lectio Divina* prayer. Each student is to silently read the passage to themselves three times and to reflect between the readings on how God is calling them to live out their vocation to be Temples of the Holy Spirit. This prayer time should last about 3-5 minutes.

Emphasize the following points to students:

- Safe/trusted friends and safe adults are those who always respect your boundaries.
- Safe/trusted friends and safe adults honor your right to say "No!"
- Safe/trusted friends and safe adults are people who demonstrate safety in all of their activities (e.g., they don't drive recklessly or forget to wear safety goggles when using a power saw).
- Our human dignity is based on being created by God in his image and likeness.
- We know that God has created us to be respected, just as he looked out for the people in our Bible stories.

Closing prayer:

Have students stand in a circle. Open the prayer with the Sign of the Cross. Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who guides us and leads us to make wise and holy decisions. Ask the students to each offer a brief prayer of thanksgiving or intercession on the blessings of being Temples of the Holy Spirit. Lift up the student prayers and close with the Sign of the Cross.