

Intermediate Level, Grades 3, 4, 5 (ages 9 to 11 years)

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

Getting started with the Lesson:

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

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 for that empower them to communicate powerfully.
- 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.

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

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

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 and 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 3. This is optional information as a refresher on grooming that may be useful when presenting this lesson.

Protecting God's Children® Touching Safety for Children

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Supplies and Preparation

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

Activity #2: Classroom Discussion – Speaking Up, Speaking Out, and Being Heard

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

Supplies: Opening DVD
Prayer Handout/Poster
DVD Player and TV
CD player

Activity #1: Show DVD if appropriate.

Activity #2: Classroom Discussion: Speaking Up, Speaking Out, and Being Heard

The main purpose of this discussion is to help children develop communication skills that empower them to speak up, speak out, and make sure they are heard when they have something important to communicate, particularly when there is something to communicate to a trusted adult about behavior that is confusing, uncomfortable, scary, or deliberately hurtful. In the lessons, we want to concentrate on enhancing communication skills and practicing using those skills. We want children to be able to tell someone they trust and make sure that communication is as clear as possible so that what they have to communicate is actually heard.

- *When something important happens, who do you tell? Let the students identify the important, trusting people in their lives that they go to with things that are important and then ask them the following question. This question can begin to get the young people present to how they tell things to others. They have the chance to begin to look closely at what information they share with the different people in their life such as family, parents, trusted adults, friends, siblings, teachers, etc.*
- *What kinds of things do you tell them? Once the question begins to open up, use this and the following questions to expand on the discussion of this conversation to have kids start to see that there are different people in their lives with whom they share different things.*
- *Do you tell your friends different things than you tell your parents? What about teachers and other adults you trust? What do you tell them? Remember this is a time when they are testing their independence and beginning to create important friendships and establish peer relationships. **Make sure you do not make judgments about what they tell others and who they tell.** The key in this part of the discussion is to raise their own awareness about how, when, and what they share about what's happening to them.*
- *Are there things you keep to yourself? Why? This is an opportunity for the students to start noticing that they are already weighing things carefully to determine whether to share or not, and if "yes" what to share and with whom. Regardless of the age group engaged in this conversation, these questions will begin to uncover or reveal something about each person's willingness to share and to trust others with sensitive information.*
- *Does it sometimes seem like people just don't get what you are saying? Do they seem confused or ask you many questions after you tell them something? If kids say that it sometimes seems like the adults in their life don't understand them, ask them to look and see if they know why that happens. The point is to have them start to see that sometimes when they have something to tell, they just don't know what to say and sometimes when things are upsetting, they are not sure why they are upset or what happened that left them upset.*
- *When we want to share something scary, confusing, or hurtful with others, it is important that we are clear about what we are saying and tell them what they need to know so they can help us. Sometimes we just don't know what to say to explain why we are upset.*
- *Sometimes we can talk about what's making us upset if we think about what to say and how to say it first so we are clear about what we want to say.*
- *How do you suppose we can practice that?*
- *One way to make sure we communicate effectively is – if there is time - think about what to say and how to say it so that the person we talk to gets the message.*

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

[Have this prayer on a poster on the wall and as a handout for the students to pray along with you and take home with them. It is a variation of an Old Catholic Traveler's Prayer to be said before beginning the journey. Remind the students that as they grow up, they are on a kind of journey through life. Each time they leave their own home or their own room to go out on their own, they are traveling. Prayer can help prepare them for the journey and guide them along the way.]

My holy Angel Guardian,
Ask the Lord to bless the journey that I undertake,
That it may benefit the health of my soul and body;
That I may reach its end,
And that, returning safe and sound,
I may find my family in good health.
Guard, guide and preserve us throughout the day and night.

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.

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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.