

**High School Level, Grades 9 through 12 (ages 15 to 18 years)**

**Year Three Lesson Plan: Grooming—Recognizing risky adult behavior—Teacher Planning and Preparation**

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**Getting started with Lesson:**

- Principle:** To identify grooming behaviors of potential abusers. Specifically:
- 1) Adults that give gifts without permission and then instruct the child not to tell anyone about the gift or where they got it, and
  - 2) Emphasize to children when to refuse to go where an adult is trying to take them and when to refuse to do what an adult asks you to do.
- Goal:** To assist children in recognizing the risky, frightening, or confusing behaviors that adults exhibit, and to teach children how to trust their own instincts and resist the overtures of a potential molester.
- Objectives:** To give children the ability to begin to identify and define adult behaviors that indicate that the person wants more than friendship in the relationship and to trust their own instincts about what is “okay” and what is “not okay.” The goal is not to teach them all of the warning signs but to concentrate on two specific areas: 1) an adult who gives gifts without permission and instructs the child not to tell and 2) respecting their own instincts when adults’ requests make them feel uncomfortable or are confusing. The specific learning goals are:
- Children learning to distinguish between a gift given from love and generosity and one that is given as an attempt to trap them in a cycle of secrecy.
  - Children learning that they can say “no” when they feel uncomfortable or confused by how an older person is acting—even if the older person is someone they love and trust.
  - Children learning that they should not go with or meet alone with an adult in an isolated or out-of-the-way area where no one else is around.
  - Children learning that they can speak up and tell a trusted adult when someone’s behavior makes them feel uncomfortable or uneasy.

**Dealing with the teens: “Searching” is the key concept**

This is the age where all the experiences that began with puberty—the physical changes the developing emotions. The self-consciousness deepens and matures. The world of “children” is now renounced. Teens believe in their immortality and may tend to be reckless in behavior. Although it would appear that they reject authority while defining their own independence, in reality they rely on the strength and support they find in parents and meaningful adults.

- Supplies:**
- Opening Video
  - Prayer Handout
  - TV and Video Player

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**Activity #1:** **NOTE TO TEACHER:** If you have a typical prayer service that you use to start class, use it for this session also.

**Discussion:** NOTE: Invite the students to sit in chairs or on the floor in a way that creates an atmosphere of togetherness and openness. This is an opportunity for the students to share what has happened to them. They can draw on their own experiences and observations over time to 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.

**TEACHER:** “Other than the fact that you really like to get them, what do you think of when I say ‘gift.’”

NOTE: Let the young people talk about each of the questions in this section. For example, invite the young people to talk about what a gift is and encourage them to think beyond the package wrapped in pretty paper and topped with a big bow that is given on special occasions such as birthdays and Christmas.

**TEACHER:** “It seems ridiculous to even ask that question, doesn’t it? However, a gift is something more than a package wrapped in paper with a bow on top or a gift bag filled with items and colorful tissue paper. The dictionary defines “gift” as “something that is bestowed voluntarily and without compensation.”<sup>1</sup> It also defines “bestow” as presenting or conferring something.<sup>2</sup> Without compensation” means what?” NOTE: Students shout out the answers.

**“Yes, when you get something without compensation it means that you did not have to pay for it. However, ‘without compensation’ means a great deal more than without payment. It really means that nothing is expected in return. That means that if there is ANY condition or expectation, it is not really a gift. ”**

**“So, 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?”**

NOTE: Encourage the students to talk through this issue for themselves.

**Points to make:**

NOTE: It is important that the young people begin to expand their idea of what constitutes a gift. Many of the traditional things are included when we talk about gifts, but there is much more that can be considered as a gift and child molesters will use everything that they have.

- Some gifts are easily identified as a “gift,” others are not quite so obvious, and still others look like gifts but are not gifts at all.
- It is the intention behind the giving of the gift that must be clarified.
- Sometimes we are tempted to overlook the intention behind the gift because
  - It is something that we really want and this is our only chance to get it.
  - It might look weird to others if we decline the gift.

<sup>1</sup> / The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

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- A friend—or someone we think is a friend—is urging us to take the gift.
- Gifts from parents, family members, and friends that recognize special occasions or acknowledge accomplishments are great and should be cherished and appreciated. However, these gifts are never or at least should never be given in secret on the condition that parents and guardians are kept in the dark. When these conditions are placed upon the giving—it is not a gift.
- Some gifts don't come in packages. Someone buying you lunch or paying for you to go to the movies can also be a gift.
- Someone allowing you to do something that you know your parents would not approve of or to wear something that your parents would object to or to go somewhere your parents would not permit you to go may seem like a gift but it is not. The giver may expect something in return—and they may not let you know that immediately.

**“What are some reasons that people—other than parents and guardians, grandparents, and family members—give gifts? What if they ask you to keep it a secret?”**

**Points to make:**

**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.

- There are “events” and “special occasions” when students get gifts from people other than parents and family, but for the most part these events are not everyday occurrences. The gifts are given in front of others or with the permission of parents.
- Gifts are an opportunity to recognize something special or to acknowledge something such as recognition of an accomplishment or an acknowledgment of the completion of something.
- Graduation is one of the times that gifts come from friends other than our parents and family, as well as first communion and confirmation.
- Sometimes people give you things in order to “get something” from you. For example, they use the item as a bribe or an incentive to get you to do something you don't want to do or are uncomfortable doing—and they encourage you NOT to tell your parents about it.  
**“What is an example of this?”** [Example: Someone offers you a pirated CD or a video game which your parents object to you having or even playing.] **THIS IS NOT A GIFT.** It looks like a gift, seems like a gift, and the person giving it even says that it is a gift. It is important that all of us begin to recognize the situations when others are using these so called “gifts” to get us to do what they want—even if we don't really want to do it.
- Companies and sports teams often give gifts to people for promotional purposes. For example, the first 100 people at the opening game of the local professional baseball or basketball team get a ball cap or a new bat, or everyone who comes to opening day of a new store gets a free CD, or a store has a “buy one, get one free” promotion.
- Sometimes grandparents or aunts and uncles give gifts and then they tell you to keep it a secret. Keeping secrets about gifts is wrong, particularly when you think that your parents will be upset about the gift or may tell you to give the gift back.

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- If the standard for determining whether or not something is a gift is that it is given freely and without expecting anything in return, then anything that comes with a requirement or even a strong request to keep it from your parents is not given freely “without compensation.”
- In the overall scheme of things, it may not seem like a big deal to keep a secret from your parents about a gift from a friend or family member. The key here is not whether you keep a secret from your parents—there are other issues to consider when you are dealing with that issue. The issue is keeping a secret from your parent or guardian about a gift that was given to you on the condition that you keep it a secret.  
**“When someone asks you to do that, how do you feel? ”**
  - Un-easy
  - Un-comfortable
  - Un-certain

Notice that all of these start with “un” and without the “un” they describe how we feel when a gift given is truly one from generosity and love.

**“How do you deal with those feelings—particularly when the thing that is offered is something that you really want or is something really special? Do you ignore them or talk yourself out of them or do you listen to that discomfort as if it is the God voice within you telling you that something is just not right?”**

- The reasons a person may state in order to justify the request are never enough to overcome you doing the right thing. A request to keep a gift secret from your parents is only going to put distance between you and your parents—and they won't have any idea why it is happening. They will just know that it is.
- Someone who lets you do things that your parents would not allow you to do without getting permission or gives you gifts that your parents do not know about is not a friend. Their interests are not the same as yours and their actions should always be suspect. Even though it may seem harmless to you—after all, you just disagree with your parents about this issue—the intentions of the adult involved may be very different than you think. This person does not deserve your trust, even if it is someone you trusted in the past.
- Remember from earlier lessons that safe adults and safe friends are those that respect your wishes and the wishes and rules of your parents, guardians, and caretakers when it comes to these types of issues.
- When someone suggests that you can do something that you think your parents would not allow or accept a gift you are unsure about, tell the person that you really can't do that without first talking with your parents. If the adult or older person objects, tries to talk you out of making that call, or leaves you with the idea that it can just be your own “secret,” it is best to steer clear of that person.

**“How does it make you feel when your friends, people you trust, or perhaps even your parents keep secrets from you?”**

**Points to make:**

- It might not seem like a big deal but think about how it makes you feel when your friends keep a secret from you. It makes you feel like you are an outsider and it usually hurts your feelings. The same thing happens with parents when you keep secrets from them.

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- Keeping secrets about things that you know your parents would want to know creates distance between you and them. Even if they are standing beside you, it feels like they are far away because you are keeping an important secret.

**“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?”**

**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' wishes, the risk of harm to you is great and along with God, the people who love you most and most want what is best for you are your parents.
- Sometimes it is hard to talk with parents about something like this because perhaps the adult whose behavior is off is a friend of theirs or, worse still, a relative. Perhaps it is difficult because you know that your parents will be upset and you don't want to cause them to be upset. If that is the case and you don't feel you can talk with your parents about what is happening, find another adult that you trust and go to that person for advice and support.
- Trust your inner voice. Listen to your own instincts and pay attention to the God voice that is telling you whether something is right or not.

**Activity #2: When to go and when to say “no.”**

**Supplies:** Map of the Church property

**Directions:** **NOTE TO TEACHER:** Review the Supplemental Teacher Preparation material in Lesson #5 and the points made in the lesson. Remind the students that these lessons are designed to give them the tools to protect themselves when difficult or even dangerous situations arise. Review their right and responsibility to tell someone if anyone—adult or young person—does something that leaves them feeling bad, uncomfortable, scared, or confused. Acknowledge that it may be difficult to talk about these situations but remind the students that one of the important reasons to tell a trusted adult when something odd happens is that although the student may be safe from harm, others may be vulnerable also. Telling a trusted adult can help protect others.

Remind them that knowing what to do when someone intrudes upon their boundaries or violates the touching rules can mean the difference between safety and harm, and that one of the key elements of the touching rules is that you **MUST** tell a trusted adult when someone violates the rules.

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, to think of the possible risks before they go somewhere with someone and put themselves in a dangerous or risky situation.

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**TEACHER:** "Perhaps you don't realize it, but according to law enforcement and statistical research, teenagers are more often the victims of crime than any other group in society. People who know tell us that the reason for this is that you go out more frequently, you are often out at night, and, frankly, you are prone to ignoring or paying very little attention to your personal safety. Molesters and predators know this so they see you as easy targets. For the most part, it is hard for you to imagine that anyone you have learned to trust is not trustworthy, so, unfortunately, you get trapped in situations that you have a hard time seeing your way out of.

One particularly effective grooming tool that molesters and predators use is to establish a trusting relationship with the young person or teen and then convince the student to go with them to a secluded area—often for what seems like a somewhat logical reason.

It is important to remember that anyone who has your best interests at heart is not going to insist on time alone with you in a secluded area. In fact, anyone who is genuinely trustworthy will make a real effort to make sure that the environment where you meet or work is open—a place where others are likely to drop by unannounced and where everything is open and aboveboard.

Although not everyone who invites you to a secluded location has an evil intention, it is important for you to be careful and always be on guard. Protect yourself! Practice personal safety! Trust your own instincts! Listen to that uneasy feeling in your gut and stay safe."

**"Let's talk about some risky situations and how you might deal with them effectively."**

- 1. You are ready to leave work and the store manager asks you—only you—to stay late and help him or her with a special project. What do you do? What do you say?**
- 2. An adult insists on time alone with you in a secluded area. For example, a coach who offers private coaching on Saturday or after school or a teacher who offers to tutor you privately at his or her home or in an office with no windows at a time when no one else is going to be around.**
  - Never allow yourself to be in a secluded location alone with an adult.
  - One of the behavioral warning signs of adults who are possibly a risk to young people is someone who always wants to be alone with children. This person discourages others from participating and plans their meeting with students in areas where they can't be monitored.
- 3. How do you know that what is being asked of you is risky or dangerous when you know the person and you have reason to trust the person issuing the invitation?**

**Points to make:**

- Avoid going anywhere alone with another adult or older teen. There is truly safety in numbers. If any adult or older teen tries to get you to go somewhere with him or her alone, insist on inviting someone to go with you. If there is no one around call a friend on the phone and ask them to join you. Don't be intimidated by anything the adult has to say about the situation and don't be rushed into taking action. Protect yourself.
- Remember that because someone has demonstrated their trustworthiness in the past does not mean that you should blindly go where they ask you to go or do what they ask you to do.

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- Even if someone has earned your trust in the past, consider the circumstances under which you developed the trust. For example, did they agree to keep a secret for you, or did they agree to help you do something that your parents said “no” to, or did they buy you a gift that you wanted but could not afford? This may be your definition of “trustworthy” but it does not mean that the person is a “safe” adult. In fact, that person has demonstrated several of the warning signs of someone who is a potential risk of harm to children and young people.
  - Safe adults do nothing that scares, confuses, or hurts you without a good reason (i.e. a nurse gives a shot or a dentist repairing a problem tooth) and they honor and respect your boundaries and the rules set by your parents.
- 4. If you find yourself in a situation that suddenly becomes dangerous or risky, what do you do?**
- When you are in a dangerous situation, yell “fire” rather than “help” or “rape.” You will get more attention faster by yelling “fire” than anything else and what you need to do is get attention so that others pay attention to you and you are no longer alone with an unsafe person. Also, don’t hesitate to make a scene—that is exactly what may be needed to cause your attacker to leave or to get another adult to come to your aid.<sup>3</sup>
  - On a date, know your own limits and values and clearly communicate them to your date. If he or she does not honor those wishes, call someone immediately or, if necessary, make a scene to draw attention to yourself and the situation and get out of harm’s way. A little embarrassment is much easier to survive than a sexual assault or an unwanted touch of any kind. REMEMBER: It is never too late to say “no!”
  - Trust your sense of danger. If something doesn’t feel right to you, don’t do it no matter what anyone says. Trust yourself. You are the one who has your own best interests at heart.

**What if the request to meet somewhere comes from someone I met online in a chat room for teens? After all, he or she seems really nice and the only way to know that is to meet the person. It seems harmless...**

- Chat rooms can be fun, but they are also dangerous if you are not careful.
- Some of these chat rooms may be truly private, while others may be listed with the names of other chat rooms on a directory. If the chat room name is listed on a directory, nothing will stop a stranger from entering the chat room.<sup>4</sup>
- You never know whether someone online is really who and what they say that they are. Child molesters roam from chat room to chat room trolling for teens who will engage with them in conversation and on whom they can prey.
- Never meet anyone you met online alone or in a private or secluded location. Bring parents and/or friends — if you agree to meet at all.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.hooah4health.com/4life/hooah4teens/safetyskills.htm>, U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, the Army National Guard, and the Office of the Chief, Army Reserve. Copyright 2006

<sup>4</sup> Farley, R.H., [An Overview of 'Online' Problems and Risks - \(01/10/2005\)](#) -, and [Exposing the Dangers of Internet Chat Rooms - \(03/03/2005\)](#) -www.virtusonline.org, © National Catholic Services, 1999-2006.

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- Never give anyone online the following information:
  - A photograph of you or any of your friends.
  - Your first name, last name, or any other name you may use.
  - Your home address, city, or state.
  - Your home or mobile telephone numbers.
  - Your Social Security number.
  - The name of the school you attend.
  - The name of your school's sports team or the school colors.
  - The names of any of your friends.<sup>5</sup>
- Never allow anyone you met on a chat room to upload a photo to your computer. A predator or other unscrupulous person can include a virus, a Trojan horse, or other device in the document that will give them access to everything on your computer and then your identity is no longer secret and your safety is compromised.

**How can we make a difference today in our own lives and in the Church?****Points to make:**

- Promise yourself that you will be “assertive” when someone tries to convince you or coerce you into going somewhere alone with him or her. Trust your own instincts when something just doesn't feel right and act immediately if you are uncomfortable, confused, or afraid.

**[NOTE TO TEACHER:** Make sure that the students clearly understand what you mean by being assertive. Assertiveness is the ability to honestly express your opinions, feelings, attitudes, and rights. In addition, it means expressing these things without too much anxiety and in a way that doesn't infringe on the rights of others. It's not aggressiveness. Aggressiveness is bullying and assertiveness is a middle ground between being a bully and a doormat.]

- Talk with your parents about what you learned today and about the promise you are making to yourself and to them to be assertive, to trust your own instincts, and to make a scene if you have to protect yourself.

**Activity #3: Tour the Church Facility**

- We can tour our Church facility and make a note of places where an adult could seclude a child—and we can do that during class today. This is a real opportunity to look at the Church



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facilities with a new eye and to help make the environment safer for the younger children in the parish (or school).

**[NOTE TO TEACHER:** Divide the class into groups of at least three teens. An effective method is to divide the total number in the class by three (or four if you need to) and then have the students count off. So, if there are 20 students have them count off 1 through 5 and then start over. Then all the 1s are in a group and the 2s are in another group etc. Doing this deliberately mixes up the students and avoids anyone being left out of a team—or groups greater than three or four that want to go together.

Assign them a specific part of the building or the Church property to review. It will be their job to go to that part of the facility or the property and in 15 minutes look around and identify, with written descriptions or photographs of the problem places, any place where an adult could seclude a child. If you can provide disposable cameras or digital cameras for the groups to use, the students can take photographs of the areas that are of concern.]

**TEACHER: “Get together with your team and tour that area of the Church’s property that you have been assigned. Then, (choose the appropriate instruction based on the materials available to the students):”**

- Make a list of the places where a child could be secluded, or
- Take pictures of the places where a child could be secluded or take pictures of areas where an adult could seclude a child without being seen.

“Be back here in \_\_\_\_\_ minutes, at (give an exact time to be back in the room and make sure that you leave 15 minutes of class time to create a report and complete with prayer.

When you return, we will put the (list and /or photos) together and create a presentation to the Youth Minister, the Pastor (the school administrator if applicable), and the Parish Council showing them what we discovered when we looked for places that create a risk to children and youth in our Church environment. In addition, we can create recommendations for how to deal with these situations.”

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** When the students return, work with them to create a report for the Church leadership about the situations that they found and how to make the facilities safer for everyone. Invite the students to select representatives from the group to take the report to parish leadership. Offer to go with them to present their findings.

**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.

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Guard, guide and preserve us throughout the day and night.

Amen.

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