

Personal Safety Curriculum for Children and Youth

A Component of the Safe Environment Education Program Diocese of Tucson

Student Objectives

The student will:

- a. Review parts of their bodies that are considered private and to respect these in self and others, and that they are loved persons deserving of respect.
- b. Explain the importance of reporting abuse until they are believed.
- c. Define emotional abuse and name concrete courses of action to take if they experience it.
- d. Explain the consequences of false reporting of abuse.

Lesson Overview

A continuum is used to review different types of touching. The lesson proceeds with a discussion of emotional abuse. Questions emphasize the importance of honest reporting of abuse. Information is offered about child protection agencies and the consequences of false reporting. Further, students practice self-talk by using stress management techniques.

Background Information

Both forms of abuse, sexual and emotional, can have serious long-term effects. The impact of such abuse is made worse by a range of factors, including shame, keeping the abuse a secret, and blaming self for the abuse. Victims of abuse seem to run a greater risk of perpetuating the cycle of abuse. It is important to encourage students to continue to report the abuse until they are believed. With sensitivity, it is also important to emphasize that reports must be honest. Explore some of the consequences, for self and others, of making a false report. The overall goal of education at this age is not only to help children recognize, resist and report abuse, but also to give them a basis for resisting it and counteracting it by reminding them of the truths of God-given human dignity and love.

Vocabulary

Emotional Abuse: an ongoing pattern of behavior, such as intimidating, belittling, ignoring, corrupting, speaking or acting in ways that affect one's healthy emotional development.

Catechist's Role

- Review the concepts of safe/comfortable touch and unsafe/uncomfortable touch, neglect and physical abuse. Emphasize the importance of reporting abuse to a trusted adult and the importance that reports be truthful.
- Introduce the concept of emotional abuse or maltreatment.
- Involve students in a process of identifying strategies for responding to abuse to potentially abusive situations.

Suggested Materials

- “Continuum of Touching”
- “Give Me A Break”
- “How Do I Spell Relief?”

Teaching/Learning Activities

Activity/Experience:

1. Use “Continuum of Touching” as a tool to discuss different types of touching or body contact (respectful and healthy touching versus hurtful or unwanted touching).
2. Ask students if they know what emotional abuse is. Explain that emotional abuse is when parents or those who are close to a child continually and consistently treat the child in cruel ways, like verbal attacks, belittling, ridiculing, shaming, terrorizing, ignoring, rejecting, degrading, corrupting or placing excessive and unreasonable demands on the child. The fairy tale, “Cinderella” may be a good illustration of this abuse.
3. Ask students the following:
 - a. What do you think emotionally abused persons might begin to believe about themselves?
 - b. What do we believe about the value of every human person?
 - c. What can a person do if he or she experiences repeated emotional abuse?
 - d. Why is it important to tell someone if either you or a friend is being physically, sexually or emotionally abused?
 - e. Why is it important to keep on telling until someone believes you and agrees to help you?
4. Explain that there are police officers and social workers in each state whose job is to protect children from being abused.
5. Explore the consequences of false reporting of abuse.
6. What is the difference between bullying and abuse? Teasing and abuse?
7. Review the concepts of personal safety and body privacy.
8. Explain and/or review the three step process of “NO! GO! TELL!”

(NO...Tell the person who is trying to abuse you; GO...Leave if you can; TELL...Tell someone and keep telling until someone believes you and helps you).

Processing the Experience

Content Questions:

1. What is sexual abuse?
2. What is physical abuse?
3. What is emotional or verbal abuse?
4. Why is any type of abuse wrong?

Questions for Personal Reflection:

1. What are some important reminders (self-talk) for yourself if you feel confused or hurt?
2. Use the Handout “How Do I Spell Relief?” for quiet written reflection.

Closure

Remind students that they know lots of ways to take good care of themselves, like relaxing, stretching, praying, etc. Using the Handout “Give Me a Break”, divide the class into small groups and have each group choose a stress-relieving technique discussed in the handout.

CONTINUUM OF TOUCHING

No Touch	Safe [Comfortable] Touch	Confusing Touch	Unsafe [Uncomfortable] Touch	No Touch
	"Heart Touch" Caring Touch Welcomed Touch		Hurtful Touch Abusive Touch Unpleasant Touch	

Use the continuum and the points given below as a tool to discuss different types of - touching or body contact. (Note: It is best if students give the examples of touches and feelings. Always emphasize that we can listen to and trust the feelings that tell us when something is wrong or unsafe.)

1. **Ask students to name touches they like and feel good about.** Possible examples are: hugs, hand shakes, pats on the back, tickles, holding hands, kisses, mom's hand on forehead when sick, snuggling when cold or scared, arms around each other, high five, someone brushing your hair, back rub.
2. **Ask students what types of touch they think are bad, hurtful or abusive, i.e., touches they definitely do not want to receive.** Examples include: assaults, beatings, beltings, kicks, slaps, punches, scratches, tripping, pushing down, bullying, pulling hair, pinching, biting, forceful or sneaky touching of private parts. (Review meaning of "private parts," if necessary: parts of the body covered by a swimsuit.)
3. **Point out the two extremes of the continuum, which are both lack of touch.** On the negative end, this means refusing care, protection and affection, which are needed for a person to grow up healthy and happy. On the positive end, this represents people whose love and friendship is evident, but not demonstrated by much touch. People and families are different in how much touching they want to give and receive.
4. **Ask if students can think of a time when a safe [comfortable] touch began to feel like an unsafe [uncomfortable] touch -- the touching was the same, but they felt differently about it.** (Give an example of your own, such as a time when you were being tickled, but the person wouldn't stop and it was hurting you.) Other possible examples are:
 - A person you do not know (or like) very well gives you a big long hug.
 - A handshake that squeezes too hard and hurts.
 - Someone crowding too close to you, being "too friendly."
 - A hug or kiss from a person you're mad at or afraid of.
 - These touches can be confusing because they give mixed messages.

5. **Ask students what feelings alert them to these confusing touches?** Body signals include stomach tightening, feeling scared, angry, anxious, trapped, etc. - one's body says, "Uh oh, I don't like this."
6. **Stress that no one, whether stranger, acquaintance, relative or friend, has the right to force or trick them into sexual contact or activities that they do not feel comfortable about.** When anyone touches them in a way that confuses or hurts them, they can let the person know that they don't like it and they can tell what happened to someone they trust. (NO, GO, TELL)
7. **Emphasize that no one has a right to intentionally injure them or to frighten and hurt them emotionally over and over again.** They can talk about what hurts them and they can tell someone who will help them.

HOW DO I SPELL RELIEF?

Directions: Think about some of your most stressful situations. List them in column 1. Then think of as many ways as you can handle the stress in each situation. Finally, write some positive and encouraging things to tell yourself in order to help you get through it.

MY STRESSFUL SITUATIONS	WAYS I CAN HANDLE THIS STRESS	POSITIVE SELF-TALK FOR THIS SITUATION
1.		
2.		
3.		

GIVE ME A BREAK!

Relaxing Your Muscles, Your Mind and Your Spirit

When you find yourself feeling anxious or tense, try some of these techniques to help you relax.

1. **DEEP BREATHING.** Sit comfortably with your feet on the floor. Take a deep breath by inhaling through your nose slowly while you count to 10. Hold your breath for a couple of seconds. Then exhale through your mouth slowly while you count to 10 again. Concentrate on how your chest, stomach and back muscles feel as you continue this slow deep breathing for a few minutes (counting slowly to 120, for example).
2. **INSTANT CONVERSATION.** Close your eyes, breathe deeply and relax every part of your body - your arms, your legs, your back, your shoulders, your neck, your jaw, your face. In your imagination, travel to your favorite natural place - a beautiful park, a seashore, a mountaintop. Feel, see, hear and smell everything around you in this beautiful and peaceful place. Notice the sun on your face, the breeze, the smell of flowers or pine trees. Hear the rustle of leaves, water, splashing, birds singing, whatever natural sounds belong in your special place. Meet Jesus in this special place. Tell him your situation and ask him what to do. Listen quietly. Enjoy being with Jesus in that place for a few minutes before returning to the present.
3. **STRETCHING.** Stand up and stretch. Yawn a few times. Take a deep breath and in through your nose and out through your mouth. Shake your arms and body with all your muscles loose and relaxed. Finally, just stand for a minute enjoying how it feels to be relaxed.
4. **MINUTE MEDITATION.** In a quiet place, close your eyes, breathe deeply and relax your body. Listen to these words that God speaks to you in the Bible. Hear God saying your name as you slowly repeat the words over and over in your mind: "I, your God, am holding you by the hand - I tell you, do not be afraid, I will help you" (Isaiah 41:13).
Here are some other words of God from the Bible that you could use:
 - "God will be with you and will not fail you or leave you. So do not be afraid or discouraged" (Deut. 31:8)
 - "God shelters me in a tent in times of trouble" (Psalm 27:5)
 - "Give all your worries to God, for God is looking after you" (1 Peter 5:7)
5. **NECK STRETCHES.** Stand or sit up straight, but comfortable. Lower your head until your chin touches your chest. Swing your head slowly from side to side, feeling a gentle pull in your neck and shoulders. Let your head flop gently back and hold it there for a bit. Then turn to look over your right shoulder as far as you can. Bring your chin down to touch your shoulder. Feel the gentle stretch of neck and shoulder muscles. Do the same by looking over your left shoulder. Finally, relax and return to normal.
6. **UNWINDING EXERCISES:**
 - Stand with your feet about 19 inches apart. Reach upward with your right hand as if you were stretching for something. Let your right hand fall back down and

reach up with your left hand. Repeat with right hand, left hand, etc. three times. Return to starting position and raise both arms out sideways from shoulders, palms down, fingers spread. Stretch outward as far as you can.

- Bend forward and down, allowing your arms to swing and your fingers to brush the floor with your head down. Feel the stretch in your legs and back. Bounce gently five or six times. Return to starting position again, placing your hands on the back of your thighs. Lean backwards slowly sliding your hands down the back of your legs and dropping your head back. Return to standing position.