

Keeping Children Safe – Grade 5 & 6 – Week One

Begin by saying

This week we will begin talking about our own personal safety. You may wonder why we talk about this in Religious Education Classes. It is important for you to understand that because you are created by God with great love, God is very much concerned with your well being and safety. Sometimes when children do not feel safe, they do not know that anyone cares whether they are safe or not. We want you to know that God cares a great deal and wants adults in your life to help you to stay safe as you grow up.

OPENING PRAYER

We will begin our lesson today with a reading from the First Letter of John, which may help us to better understand God’s love and care for us. So, let us begin
*In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

1 John 4: 10, 13, 16, 19

Love, then, consists in this:

Not that we have loved God but that God has loved us, and has sent God’s Son as an offering for our sins.

The way we know we remain in God and God in us is that God has given us the Holy Spirit.

We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us.

God is love, and the person who abides in love abides in God, and God in that person.

We, for our part, love because God first loved us.

The Word of the Lord.

ALL Respond

Thanks be to God. Amen

PART ONE

ON MY OWN

SAY

How many of you are allowed to walk to a friend’s house alone? Go to the store alone? Go to the mall with friends? Take the dog for a walk?
I see that many of you may be alone at times. Sooner or later, each of us will find ourselves somewhere alone. Let’s look at ways to stay safe when we are alone.

Situation Cards

Divide your class into four groups. Give each group a “Situation Card.” Ask them to read the situation and decide what they would do. When everyone in the group has responded, turn the card over and read the suggestions for staying safe.

Discussion

- If you were able to think of something safe to do for your situation, show me a “thumbs up.”
- What information is most helpful?
- What do you need to prepare to be alone?

Call on the students to list safety rules. Write their rules on the board. Display the Safety Rules Poster to see if they thought of everything. Then show them the second poster “the 3 D’s for Telling.” If something is Dangerous, Destructive or Disturbing, tell an adult.

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Family Worksheet Distribute the Family Worksheet “ON MY OWN” to the students. Have them put their name on top.
Instruct them to take the worksheet home and with their parents develop a plan for staying safe. Write down some of the people you could ask for help.

PART TWO APPLYING THE RULES

Point to the the word “DANGER” on the poster. Ask the students what they think of when they hear this word. Be sure they come up with a definition that is something like the dictionary definition:

“Exposure or vulnerability to harm or evil; risk; peril”

SAY Now we will identify some additional situations they you might encounter that could be dangerous and help you learn how to avoid them. We will use the rules [*point to the poster*]. You will tell me which rules apply.
People who would harm children often use tricks that cause children to be separated from others who would help protect them. I am going to describe various situations and I want you to tell me if each situation a “TRICK” and what DANGER might be present. If it is a trick, I also want you to tell me the Safety Rules that you would use to be safer.

TRICK 1 Give each child a packet of TRICKS (which we supplied). The first page is about the child being offered a ride (*The Offer Trick*). Ask someone to read the page aloud and then ask:

Is this a trick or not? What do you think about that?

After the discussion say:

SAY This could be a trick. If you were to accept the ride, you would be by yourself in a car and no one would know where you were. You need to check first to see if it’s okay with your parent, your grandparents, your guardians, or another trusted adult. The “Offer Trick” is when someone offers you something that you want, and puts you in a position where they could hurt you, and no one else will be there to help you.

TRICK # 2 Let’s look at Trick #2 (*The Animal Trick*) on the next page. Who would like to read it out loud? (*after reading*) . Is this a trick or not?

After the discussion say:

SAY This could be a trick. This is the “Animal Trick.” People who may want to trick children know how much fun you can have with a puppy or kitten. They would use your enjoyment of pets to trick you into going into a house alone where others may not be able to help protect you. What safety rules would you use to make sure this is not a tick that would hurt you?

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Students should say:

- Check with a trusted adult first
- Go with friends

TRICK #3 Have them turn to Trick # 3 (The *Help Trick*) and invite someone to read it aloud.

SAY Is this a trick or not? Why do you say that?

After the discussion say:

SAY Here we have a person asking for help, but to give help, you would have to get so close to the car that the person would be able to grab you. People who use this trick count on you to be helpful. When adults need help, they should ask other adults. Only when your parents, grandparents, caretaker or other trust adult in charge gives their OK, should you offer to help anyone. When you do, remember your other safety rule and go with friends. If anything happens that makes you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused, immediately get out of the situation and tell an adult you trust.

Remember, the “Help Trick” could also involve a person who says something bad has happened like a fire or serious illness and then offers to take you home or to your parents, grandparents or guardians. What safety rules could you apply to avoid being tricked?

Students should respond “Check first, and tell an adult you trust.”

TRICK #4 Have your students turn to Trick #4 about using the INTERNET. Invite a student to read the page aloud and then ask whether this is a trick or not. After the discussion:

SAY This trick is the “False-Identity-Online Trick.” The Internet is a fun way to talk with people from all over the world. If you stop and think about it, you only know the people you first meet online by what they tell you about themselves. They are not really our friends and should not be trusted like they are. Even if the person posts a photo, you have no way of knowing if it is photo of the person you are chatting with.

There are people who use the Internet to try to get children to meet them in person. When children go to meet people offline they first met online, they are in danger of being harmed. You should never agree to meet someone in person you first met online without your parents’, grandparents’ or guardians’ permission and then taking an adult you trust with you to the meeting and being sure the meeting is in a public place.

TRICK # 5 **If you only have ten minutes left, skip to Part Three.**

If YOU HAVE TIME, have the class turn to the last page of the Trick Booklet and invite a student to read aloud. After the page has been read, ask the class whether they think this is a trick and why or why not. After the discussion

SAY This is the “Open-the-Door Trick.” Someone tries to get you to open the door

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when you are home by yourself. If this happens to you, **do not open the door**. You should use the telephone and call the emergency number that your parents, grandparents, or guardians tell you to use. If you don't have an emergency number, call a neighbor friend and ask for their help. If the person at the door tries to open it and you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused, call 9-1-1 and tell the person who answers that you are home alone and need help. Then stay on the telephone and follow the operator's instructions.

Being home alone is a lot of responsibility for you. Before you have that responsibility, you should talk with your parents or caretakers about the rules for being home alone. One of the rules is to keep the door shut and locked when you parents or caretakers are not home. Never open the door for anyone other than someone you know to be a trusted family friend and who your parents or caretakers have said is OK to let in the house that day!

PART THREE

SAFETY IN PUBLIC PLACES

SAY

Most of the times when you go to a movie, the mall, or a part you probably go with your parents or another trusted adult. However, as you get older, you will probably want to go by yourself or with a group of friends. Sooner or later, your parents or other adults in your lives will give you permission to go to these places without an adult along.

When you are alone with friends, it is especially important to be able to trust your friends to do what is right and to respect you and your ideas. Even when we select positive friends there are some special safety issues we need to understand. Usually theaters, malls and parks are not dangerous places to be. Who can think of a situation which might make them dangerous?

Gather the students' ideas. Mention the following if not suggested by the students:

- If it is a place where groups of teens gather who might be in gangs.
- If it is dark.
- If you are alone with only one or two strangers around.
- If it is a place where drugs are used or available.
- If you see weapons of any kind.
- If someone starts to follow you.

Student Handout

Distribute the Student Handout, "Safety in Public Places." Display the poster. Review the points with the student, augmenting the information on the poster with the suggestions below. Encourage students to take notes on the handout for future use and to share additional tips they have learned for staying safe in public places.

SAY

Even though you may want to be independent and away from your parents or other adults you know for a while, they can help you stay safe. Here's how:

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How Parents and Other Trusted Adults Can Help

- Always ask permission from your parents or caretaker. Tell them specifically where you are going, why and who you will be with. Adults often know whether or not a place is safe.
- If you are unsure of the place or have never been there before, take an adult along at least the first time you and your friends go. Make note of the exits, security staff and telephones for the future.
- Be sure a parent or caretaker knows where you are going, who you are with and when you will return. This ensures that help will find you if needed.
- Notify your parents or caretaker about any change in plans.
- Return home on time. If you are late, help can be sent.

What YOU Can Do To Be Safe

- Always carry a cell phone for money for a phone call in an emergency. (Be careful to whom you give your cell phone number)
- Avoid dark or isolated hallways and paths.
- Go places with one or more friends. There is always strength in numbers.
- Stay with your friends. Don't wander off by yourself. Even if you are only going to the restroom, it is wise to have a friend close by or waiting for you outside the restroom.
- If your group of friends splits into smaller groups and goes to different places or stores in the mall, arrange a specific meeting place and time. Know where each group is going. It is best to stay together, although in some malls, security will not allow young people to gather in groups of five or more.
- Find out what security personnel are available and where they are located. They can help, too!

How Security Personnel Can Help

- Locate the security guard station, first aid station, and other places you can go for help BEFORE you need it.
- If you need to wait for a ride home, wait inside the building if possible. If you must wait outside, ask a security guard to wait with you.
- If you see weapons or drugs, get to a safe place and tell a security guard, police officer or other trusted adult.

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SAY

Strangers can pose special problems. Here are some tips:

What To Do About Strangers

- Limit conversations with strangers. This is not the right time or place to meet someone new.
- Walk away from strangers who try to talk to you, follow, or try to sell you something if they are not hired by a store in the mall.
- Do **NOT** give your name, address or phone number to any stranger—even if he/she is your age.
- If someone is bothering you, talk to a security guard or other adult in the area. Ask an employee in the area to call security; wait for security to come or call a parent to pick you up.

Ask the students if there are any other tips they have learned, perhaps from your parents, brothers or sisters, or other people?

Gather the information. Ask them if there are places in [*your community*] where students their age would not be safe.

CLOSURE

SAY

Today we talked about general safety when you are on your own. Next week we will meet with all the fifth and sixth graders who have class at this time and practice responding to potentially unsafe situations, as well as strategies for our personal safety and security.

Closing Prayer

Since Mary is the mother of Jesus and therefore the spiritual mother of all of us, let us close today with this special prayer to Mary.

Hail Mary . . .