

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

Lesson Plan 6: Grooming—Recognizing risky adult behavior

Getting started with Lesson 6:

- 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.
- Catechism:** Man is obliged to follow the moral law, which urges him “to do what is good and avoid what is evil” (cf. *GS* 16). This law makes itself heard in his conscience. **#1713**
- “To love is to will the good of another.” (cf. *MK* 7:21) All other affections have their source in this first movement of the human heart toward the good. Only the good can be loved. Passions “are evil if love is evil and good if it is good.” **#1766**
- 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.

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Supplies: Opening Video
Prayer Handout/Poster
TV and VCR
Boom box or CD player and Church music

Activity #1: **NOTE TO TEACHER:** If you have a typical prayer service that you use to start class, use it also for this session. If not, please consider the suggestions provided and create an appropriate prayer opening for the class.

Suggested prayer formats:

- Place a small table at the front of the room next to the teacher. Cover it with a beautiful scarf. Place an open Bible on the table along with a candle and, if available, a flower or a symbol that represents all students or the students in the class. Use the same prayer for opening and closing the lesson. Light the candle and have someone lead the other young people in reciting the prayer on the poster.
- Form a circle of silence around a lighted candle and listen to (or sing along with) an appropriate Christian song in the background such as: "You are Mine" by David Haas, "Here I Am, Lord" by Dan Schutte, "You Are Near" by Dan Schutte or another that you find appropriate. Invite the students to join in saying the prayer together.

NOTE: It is great to have music playing while the students enter the classroom. However, be sure that the last song played, during the opening prayer is slow and thoughtful. Spirited songs will leave you with spirited students.

- Have music playing in the background as the students come in to class. Ask everyone to be seated and get quiet. Play one last song and offer this prayer and intentions:
 - Loving God, we come before you today to ask your guidance and wisdom so that we may know and do your will and walk with you each day. We offer these intentions as we begin our prayer together today.
 - For all students who suffer abuse that they may feel God's loving arms enfold them and take away their pain.
 - For all those who harm students that they may seek forgiveness and turn away from harming others.
 - For all parents and others who care about children and young people that they learn how to protect them and make sure that they are safe from intentional harm.
 - [Ask for other intentions that the students wish to bring.]
 - For these intentions and all those that we hold in our hearts, we ask this in the name of Jesus your Son. Amen.

Show video if appropriate.

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

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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.

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

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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.
- 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.¹
- 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.

¹ <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

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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...

[NOTE TO TEACHER: If you are not knowledgeable about computer chat rooms, it would be advisable to invite a co-leader to assist in this discussion. Teens need to hear this from someone who actually knows how to use the chat rooms and is familiar with Internet activity. Otherwise it will just occur to them like preaching.]

- 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.²
- 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.
- 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.³
- 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?

² 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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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 #2 Exercise: Alternative #A

- 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 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

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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.

Activity #2: Alternative B SCAVENGER HUNT

- Supplies:** “Ø” symbols for “no” on www.virtusonline.org printed off in two colors. Make enough copies (four to a page) to put one symbol on each location or place where a child could be secluded by an adult and their interactions would not be visible to passersby or others in the area.
- Use one color to mark locations and areas that will need reconstruction, repair, or renovation to have the environment be safe. For example, site locks that need to be changed on rooms that are not being used, doors that need windows, unlighted areas, etc.
 - Use a second color to identify areas or locations that can be made safe by moving furniture, cleaning up storage, trimming hedges, new policies and procedures being established and enforced, etc.

Tape/masking tape

Prizes for the winning team or losing team (Ex. Winning team gets coupons for free food or drink from a local favorite or gets to select the music and games for youth activities for the next month. Losing team has to clean the youth room every week for a month or must bring refreshments for youth activities for a month. Be creative and aware of what inspires the youth in your group and create prizes that will spur them on to win).

Directions: Advance Preparation by Teacher or Youth Minister

- Take sufficient copies of the Ø symbols and tour the facility.
 - Locate and mark each place where a child could be secluded by taping one of the symbols in the area. Make sure the symbol is visible but not necessarily obvious.
 - If possible, make a list of all the locations and take digital photos of all the locations.
- Create a display of all the photos of places where an adult could seclude a child or young person. Use a white board or bulletin board that can remain out of sight during the class discussion and can be turned around or brought out at the time the activity begins.
- Teachers or Youth Ministers and, whenever possible, the RE director or administrator should tour the facilities and locate the places where an adult could seclude a child based on the criteria established in the lesson. This is a real opportunity to evaluate the Church facilities from a new perspective and to help make the environment safer for the younger children in the parish (or school) as well as for the youth to make a profound difference in the quality of the environment for children and young people.
 - Mark the places that need renovation or renovations or have costs attached to the needed changes with one color of symbol.
 - Mark places that simply need to be reorganized or cleaned up or situations that could be resolved with new policies and procedures with another color of symbol.

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[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 one through five and then start over. Then all the ones are in a group and the twos 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.

The assignment is to go on a scavenger hunt throughout the property to find as many of the symbols as they can locate in the short time allotted. They will have three minutes to look at the display showing all the places the symbols are posted. They have 15 minutes to find the symbols and return to the classroom (or youth room).]

TEACHER: “Our objective in today’s activity is to raise our awareness about the places in our own Church environment that pose a risk of harm to children and young people. In a few minutes you will be getting together in teams to go out and look for areas where an adult could seclude a child.

We have already been over the property and identified specific problem areas. In each location that we identified as a potentially risky area, you will find one of these symbols posted. Find it, fill out the reason for the selection of this location as a potentially dangerous spot, and bring the sign back with you.

The team that collects the most symbols and correctly identifies the nature of the risk at each location will be the winner. You will be given a specific amount of time to find the symbols and there will be a penalty if you fail to arrive here on time. So, I recommend that someone on the team take responsibility for keeping time.

Before you start, we have taken pictures of each of the places that we identified as risky. You have three minutes to look at the display board before you go out on your search. Be back here in _____ minutes, at _____ **[NOTE: Give the students an exact time to be back in the room and make sure that you leave 15 minutes of class time to count and check all the symbols they retrieved and to complete with prayer.]** For every minute you are late, one point will be deducted from your score.

[NOTE: Bring out or turn around the display board and set a timer for three minutes. At the end of the three minutes, call time and send them off to find the symbols. Set the timer for the length of time that they have to search. At the end of the search time, use a timer to keep track of the overtime for each team—if any are late.

When they return, give them one point for getting the symbol and writing out the correct reason. Deduct one half of a point if they missed the reason. Let them know that the display you made will be given to the Pastor and Parish Council to let them know what we discovered when we went looking for places that create a risk to children and youth in our Church environment.]

[NOTE TO TEACHER: The students may want to take on a service project and eliminate the risk in places that simply need to be cleaned or rearranged. This would be a great opportunity for them to continue to reinforce the fact that some adults—even some who seem trustworthy—should not be trusted when they are asking children, young people and teens to go with them alone to secluded areas.]

“In the activity, although there is a winning team, the real winners are all of you, the parish, and our children and young people. Identifying places where children, young people, or teens could be secluded will assist our faith community in its efforts to create a

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safe environment for all God's children. That we had fun doing this is a bonus. This truly is God's work!!"

Prayer to end the lesson:

(Since this prayer was handed out in the last session and the students took it home, have those who don't have their copy read it off the poster this week as you pray together.)

(Remember that this is a variation of an Old Catholic Traveler's Prayer to be said before beginning the journey. Remind the students that as they grow older, 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.

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<http://www.virtus.org/virtus/pgc-Parent-Handbook 05-03.pdf> retrieved March 5, 2004.

SCAVENGER HUNT SYMBOL



This location is
unsafe because:
