



Grade 4 - CLASSROOM

COMPASS CHILD PROTECTION CHILDREN'S PROGRAM



PERSONAL SPACE ZONES

Parent Handout

Personal Space Zones

Grade 4 - PARENT FOLLOW-UP SESSION

with children who attended the parish/school session.

Instructions for Parents:

Your child attended a lesson today which dealt with personal safety. The classroom session was intended to open discussions with your child and encourage dialogue with you, the parents.

You are encouraged, sometime within the next week, to set aside 30 minutes for a discussion on this material with your child. This packet contains information to guide your conversation, as well as a step-by-step guide with suggestions.

The information in this handout can allow you to reinforce the information taught in the session. Please repeat this dialogue with your child on a regular basis.

General Safety Tips

Please take a few minutes to read this overview on child sexual abuse as you prepare to lead your child through a conversation on keeping themselves safe. This background information is designed to help you understand the context and purpose of the safety rules that you will be introducing to your child.

A child cannot consent to any form of sexual activity.

Child sexual abuse is a form of abuse that includes sexual activity with, or in front of, a minor. When a person engages with a minor in this way, they are committing a crime that can have lasting effects on the victim.

Child sexual abuse does not necessarily include physical contact. These are forms of child sexual abuse:

- Sending obscene phone calls, text messages, or other communication.
- Fondling or touching a child's private parts.
- Coercing, forcing or tricking a child to touch the private parts of an adult or another child.
- Having sex of any kind with a minor.
- Exposing oneself to a minor.
- Producing, owning, or sharing pornographic images of children.
- Trafficking children for sex.
- Engaging in any other sexual conduct that is harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare.

Some behavioral signs in children that may indicate sexual abuse include sudden and intense fears, trauma, isolation from others, drastic disruptions in temperament and coping styles, hygiene changes (such as refusing to bathe or washing excessively), being over-protective of siblings, sleep problems or

nightmares, inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviors beyond their years, or running away from home.

Most sexual abusers have a pre-existing relationship with their victims.

Sexual abusers have gained access, authority, and often the trust of both the child and parent. They may involve themselves in a family's life as well as appear to do great things in the community – this is phony and a way of being “hidden in plain sight” to gain access to children.

A process—often called “grooming”—is a way that abusers break down a child or young person's physical, emotional, and behavioral boundaries while, at the same time, damaging their relationships with adults, their spiritual life, their values, and their sense of self. As part of a grooming process, potential abusers (also called predators) might give presents to or offer favors for children.

Grooming bribes or “guilt gifts” might include unexplained clothing, cash, jewelry, smartphones or trips. Parents should know the source of any gifts and treats their child receives. Children and teens should ask their parents before accepting ANY gifts.

Abusers use grooming tactics with parents and caregivers, too. They may be eager to babysit; they may offer “a shoulder to cry on” or financial help. They may pose as the wise counselor with sage advice (what a stressed parent often needs) or the go-to neighbor with exciting “treats” or offer to take a child on a family trip with them (things a lower-income parent may not be able to provide). These intentional behaviors are designed to trick the parent into trusting their child with the predator.

An offender's boundary violations may become so entrenched into daily life that adults fail to recognize it as grooming. In this way, a child's support network can be tricked into believing in the predator and into discounting anything that the child may say later about that person's behavior.

If a child says that they have been abused, believe them—even if you think it's impossible.

It is common for children who are victims of abuse, including neglect, to blame themselves and believe a situation is their fault. Furthermore, this message may be reinforced by the person who is abusing them. It is our responsibility as their parents to let them know that it's NOT THE CHILD'S FAULT, they did NOT do anything wrong. This should be continuously reinforced—don't just say it one time and think that's enough. For kids to believe it, we have to say it over and over.

Just as abuse is difficult for us to talk about, it is hard for children. One of the most important ways we can keep our children safe is to have open and courageous communication with them, and by encouraging them to talk to us about difficult things. Having conversations about the opposite sex, names of private parts, or other uncomfortable things related to sex helps build language and comfort with your child. This enables a child to share with you freely when they suspect abuse happening to a friend, or even to themselves.

Another aspect of this is being supportive when your child does step forward and shares something that is challenging. It may be a mistake they made, or something that a friend did, or something that happened to them that was unjust. How we react to these situations determines their level of comfort in continuing to share such things with us.

In these situations, avoid reacting emotionally, and be supportive. Talk to your child and identify ways to respond that they are comfortable with. Assure them that you still love them and you will help them find a solution.

PARENTS: Please read the entire handout before reviewing the information with your child. Be prepared to discuss the material using language that is appropriate to your child's intellectual and social abilities. And be advised that at this age level, you will find your child rapidly advancing in understanding and retention of the information.

SESSION OVERVIEW

In the session, the concept of personal space zones is taught as a tool to help children maintain and protect boundaries in order to stay safe.

The teacher introduced the concept of four Personal Space Zones – MY Zone, Friendly Zone, Social Zone and Other Zone along with activities for the kids to visualize these zones.

The session ends with a prayer.

Background information for Parents

You as parents have the chief responsibility for protecting your child. Your child should tell you where they are at every minute.

A. Personal Space Zones

Your child was taught:

1. MY Zone

There are 4 personal space zones. The first is called the “MY Zone” it is just for people that you let in.

The rules are:

They can come in, ONLY if it's ok with you.

Then ask:

If someone you let into your My Zone does something that you don't want them to do?

Say No! Move Away!

Then get help.

2. Friendly Zone

Anyone might be in your friendly zone. Someone may want to talk to you, or ask you something, or even greet you with a handshake.

If someone in your friendly zone comes into your My zone, **take a step back**. This gets everyone back into the friendly zone and out of your MY zone.

Then if they come into your My zone again, that's not ok. You should get away and get help immediately.

3. Social Zone

Your social zone includes more than one person besides you in your space.

4. Other Zone

The Other Zone is all of the other space around us.

B. Talking to Your Child about Personal Safety

Develop a shared vocabulary with your child that helps them to express their feelings and understand safety rules. We all make mistakes and your child will do so too. Rather than be discouraging, find something they did correctly and talk about what to do next time. Practice with your child how and when to say, “No! Stop!” Encourage them to always tell you where they are even if they are only going from one room to another (this helps build the habit).

Reaffirm the rules your child has learned. Use these and repeat them as you discuss other situations. Cartoons often show stories that can lead to safety conversations with your child. Look for situations where someone makes a mistake or gets into trouble. Discuss what warning signs there were. Could the character have made a better choice or avoided the whole situation?

C. Consider Teaching Your Child the Skill of Dialling 911 – It’s not too early to start!

Dialing 911 is a skill that is very important for your child to develop. It is not too young to begin helping your child learn how to dial 911 and answer questions. (Consider the capabilities of your 911 dispatch office? Established landlines may have addresses accessible to the dispatcher.)

When to call 911 . . .

- When the adult(s) in the house need the child to call because the adult or someone else in the house is not able to call and needs assistance.
- When the adult in the house is asleep and cannot wake up.
- In case of a fire.

PARENT-CHILD DISCUSSION

1. Personal Space Zones

Ask your child to show you the picture they drew of themselves in their activity book. Remind them that they are precious.

Ask:

What are the personal safe zones you have marked on this picture?

(Allow time for the child to explain the graphic)

2. My Zone

Ask:

In the class, the teacher talked about the My Zone. Can you show me with your arms where the My zone is?

(Allow your child to show you by stretching out their arm.)

Ask:

Your teacher said that people can only come into your My zone if you let them in.

Tell me some people who you might let into your My Zone.

Open the activity book, and write for your child as you allow them to think about people they come across in their daily life who enter their My Zone. It could be their friends and family, but also a doctor, dance teacher or such.

People on this list could fall into the following categories:

- Those who are involved in physically caring for your child (bathing, dressing, feeding etc.),
- Those who emotionally nurture your child with your permission (permit your child to sit on their lap, allow them to hug your child, read stories to your child etc.),

- Children who regularly play with your child appropriately for their age (such as boys of the same age who like to wrestle, or girls of the same age who hold hands and play with dolls together)
- Siblings and immediate family.

As your child mentions names, use the opportunity to discuss the details of what contexts these people enter their My zone, how they feel about it. This may help you understand more about their world and the people they interact with.

For example, if your child mentioned their older brother, and how he tickles them, ask them if they enjoy it. Talk to them about what they can do if they stop enjoying the tickling at any time.

Similarly, if they mention a classmate who sits next to them in the bus, ask them to show you how they sit. Ask them if kids play games where they lean on each other or fall on each other and how they feel about it.

If your child mentions a coach or a teacher, again ask about what contexts this person enters their My Zone.

Have open conversations about physical contact with others, and teach your child that they do not have to allow anything that they are not okay with. This will help your child have courage, if needed, in moving away and getting help.

Ask:

What do you do when someone comes into your My zone and you are not okay with it?

Step Back,

Say No!

Move Away!

Let's practice.

We are at the supermarket and you are looking at something on the shelf. Someone comes and stands right next to you looking at something else.

(Get up and act out this scene with your child. Practice responses)

You are in the school bus and an older kid you don't know comes and sits right next to you even though there's plenty of empty seats on the bus. What would you do?

(Get up and act out this scene with your child. Practice responses)

We are in church, and an older man you don't know puts his arm around you and starts talking to you. What would you do?

(Get up and act out this scene with your child. Practice responses)

You are on a team, and one of the older kids keeps coming really close to you when they are talking to you or showing you how to do things. What would you do?

(Get up and act out this scene with your child. Practice responses)

Ask:

If someone keeps trying to come into your My zone, even after you moved away, what do you do?

Get away, and get help immediately.

(Talk about how they would get help. Give them names of people and places that they can go to, if they are in a dangerous situation)

3. Prayer

End with a time of prayer, asking God for wisdom and strength to make wise choices, and say no, when it is important.