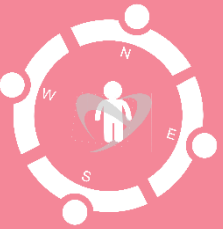




GRADE 5 - CLASSROOM

COMPASS CHILD PROTECTION CHILDREN'S PROGRAM



STAYING SAFE
Parent Handout

Staying Safe

Grade 5 - PARENT FOLLOW-UP SESSION

with children who attended the parish/school session.

Instructions for the Parents

Your child attended a lesson on staying safe by being alert. 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.

Session Overview:

- Using an illustration of how we cannot know if an apple is good or bad just by looking at the outside, the teacher talked about how people may seem nice and good when you first get to know them, but on the inside, they may want to do mean or inappropriate things.
- Different types of touch were discussed.
- The students were challenged to think about what information they share about themselves to others, and on online platforms.
- Tactics that people may use to lure children were discussed.
- Strategies were discussed, to tackle a situation where a stranger approach them, or a person is doing something that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Basic safe practices for using the internet were discussed.

Background Information for Parents:

As you prepare to lead your child through a conversation on staying safe, this background information is for you, not your children, to better understand the issues.

Child sexual abuse is a form of abuse that includes sexual activity with, or in front of, a minor. When a person engages in this way, they are committing a crime that can have lasting effects on the child. A child cannot consent to any form of sexual activity.

The following are forms of child sexual abuse:

- Sending obscene phone calls, text messages, images or other communication.
- Touching a child's private parts.
- Forcing or tricking a child to touch the private parts of an adult or another child.
- Having sex of any kind.
- Exposing oneself.
- 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 development.

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 bedwetting, 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 and/or families. 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 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. Make sure to know who is in your child's life, both children and adults. 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, phones 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. Predators 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.

A predator's boundary violations may become so entrenched into daily life that adults fail to recognize it. The people in a child's life become convinced that the predator's inappropriate behavior is

safe. 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.

One of the most important ways we can keep our children safe is to have open and courageous communication. Encourage them to come to you when they are confused about anything or have questions. Clearly teaching the names of private body parts, enables a child to share with you accurately when they suspect abuse happening to a friend, or even to themselves.

Build strong communication bridges with your children so that when they have to talk about something heavy or hard, they are able to bring it to you with greater ease. For example, your child may step forward and share about a mistake they made, something a friend did, or an unjust situation. Your reaction to these situations determines their level of comfort in continuing to bring such things your way.

When your child does come to you, avoid reacting emotionally, and be supportive. Assure them that you love them and you will help them find a solution.

Concepts and Strategies that were taught to your child during their class:

Bad Apples:

Sometimes people seem nice and good when you first get to know them, but on the inside, they want to do mean or inappropriate things. These types of “bad apples,” or abusers, might be older kids or adults who want to “be friends” with you, even though you’re much younger.

People who are “bad apples” want to cause harm to kids. It is important for us to know what counts as “harm” so we can try and know what to look out for.

Potential abusers (remember the “bad apples?”) can try to collect information about children to find out where they live or go to school. It is important to **be careful with such personal information and keep it to yourself.**

If an adult asks for your personal information, **always check with your parents before giving it out.**

There are some things that adults may do to meet a child alone:

Surprise: An adult just shows up and starts talking to you.

Trickery: This is when an adult or older kid tries to trick you into going somewhere else with them.

Gift-giving: Abusers can earn kids’ trust to get them alone by doing favors and giving gifts. Abusers may try to build relationships with kids by buying presents, offering to do homework or chores, or suggesting taking a fun trip.

If someone, **even someone you already know**, tries to force you to go somewhere you do not want to go, shout “This is not my parent!” And keep shouting until someone notices.

If someone, **even someone you already know** tries to touch private areas of your body or asks you to remove your clothes in front of them,

Shout “NO, NO, NO!” and keep shouting.

Get out of the area, and stay away from the abuser.

Find someone to tell – a parent, a teacher, or a person in uniform (like a police or security officer). If no one else is nearby, dial 911.

Here are some tips for staying secure when using the internet.

Think before you post! Once your information is on the internet, it is not always possible to remove it. Photos can be saved, screenshots can be taken, and this information can be seen and reposted by anyone.

Keep emergency contacts. If you carry a device with you, keeping your parents, guardians, or other helpful adults contact information saved can make getting help easier in the case of an emergency.

Don't connect with strangers. Be suspicious and wary of texts, friend requests and emails received from unfamiliar sources. If it makes you uncomfortable, trust that feeling and don't open them up and don't reply.

Disable Location Settings. While it is fun to share information with friends and others, this can be unsafe. Make sure that the apps you use are not recording and sharing your location.

PARENT-CHILD DISCUSSION

Following are thoughts and questions to help supplement and support your conversation with your child:

1. Discuss Abusers

Say:

In class, your teacher used the word Abusers. They said that abusers are like bad apples which look good on the outside but may have worms on the inside. They also told you that abusers can try to hurt or harm kids.

What did you think about it? How did you feel when you heard about this? Have you ever heard about this before?

Help your child talk about their understanding, past experiences and emotions on this topic.

During the class, the teacher talked about how abusers try to meet children alone and gave ideas on what to do. What would you do in each of the following situations?

- Someone came to you after school saying they were a friend of your mom's and your mom had asked them to pick you up?
- A neighbor started giving you ice cream every day. And then asked you to come inside their home one day?
- A teacher sat next to you on the school bus and the way they were sitting so close to you made you feel uncomfortable.

You can add more scenarios or examples. Talk through details of what they would say, and how they would say it. You can even role play or practice what to say.

2. Internet Safety

Adapt this next set of questions based on your family internet-use policies.

What are the different things you do on the internet? Which of these allow strangers to connect with you, contact you, or find information about you?

What are some practices that you can follow to make sure they can't?

Look at the Internet Safety Checklist in the activity book. Talk through each of the items, and help your child follow these rules.

3. Responsible Adults

Look at the Responsible Adults List in the activity book. Encourage your child to talk to each of the adults and explain that they are a responsible adult on their checklist, and what that is going to mean. Encourage your child to share anything they are unsure of with the responsible adults on their list.

4. End with a prayer

Pray with your child and ask God for wisdom and guidance to make good choices.