

Pre-K - CLASSROOM

# COMPASS CHILD PROTECTION CHILDREN'S PROGRAM



PERSONAL SAFETY  
Parent Handout

# Personal Safety

## Pre-Kindergarten- 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.

Dealing with issues of personal body safety often requires a child to behave in ways that can be uncomfortable to a child. For instance, saying “No” to an adult or summoning the courage to tell you a secret that your child was threatened not to tell can be challenging exceptions for younger children who have been taught to respect adults. You will need to give them the permission and the affirmation required so that your child believes that they can tell you anything. Practice saying “No! Stop!” with your child. In this way, children build confidence in their ability to shout if they need help.

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.

## SESSION OVERVIEW

The catechist began the session with a brief introduction to personal safety explaining that God gave your child a body which belongs to them and that their body needs to be kept safe.

The class participated in a “Made in the image of God” Mirror Image Project which you have probably seen by now. The children were taught that God made them in his image and that he gave them all of the wonderful parts of their body so they could live well day by day.

Then the teacher explained private parts of the body as the areas covered by their bathing suits.

The teacher explained the difference between safe and unsafe touches and introduced some safety rules for the children, providing specific short phrases to say and do should certain situations occur. The information is provided below.

## 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.

## PARENT-CHILD DISCUSSION

### 1. You are special

Ask your child what they thought of the class learning session. Ask them to show you what they made, and what it is supposed to remind them of. Reinforce how they are special and unique, and important to you. Reinforce also that every part of them is precious.

### 2. Our Bodies

Ask your child to open the activity book to the page titled “Our Bodies.”

Say:

In the picture on the page, you can see children wearing bathing suits. Areas of the body that are private for boys and girls are easy to remember because it's where your bathing suits cover you. For girls, the bathing suit covers the chest and below the waist. Those parts are private. For boys, the suit covers below the waist, and that part is private.

*(Use this opportunity to teach your child the names of their private parts. This is important because it helps the child accurately share with an adult if they have experienced any type of abuse)*

**Any questions?** (If your child has any questions, you should discuss it further in a language that is age-appropriate and matches your child's intellectual and social attitude and background.)

### 3. Unsafe Touch

Say:

Now let's think about some ways to keep our bodies safe.

Like I said before, our bodies are special and unique and unlike anyone else's. And as we grow older, our bodies change.

Look in the mirror. You have changed so much since you were born! When you were born, you couldn't walk. Then you learned to walk but you were pretty wobbly. And now you walk very well. Your body will grow bigger and stronger as you get older.

(Note: if you have a child who cannot walk, make the point that as we grow, we will get bigger and will know more about how to keep our bodies safe.)

As we go through this next section, explain different types of touch to your child and help them understand and why that type of touch is safe, or unsafe, and maybe even a context when that changes.

I'm going to read out some types of touch and let's talk about it.

Read out randomly different types of touch mentioned in this chart below, allowing time for discussion after each

- a hug when you want it
- holding hands
- hand placed lightly on your shoulder
- gentle kiss on the cheek from someone in the family
- rocking or holding a younger child
- a tap on the shoulder
- a pat on the back to indicate someone did a good job
- holding a person's body while they learn to ride a bike
- kick or a hair pull
- being tickled after saying "Stop!"
- a squeeze that feels too hard
- an unwanted kiss
- looking at or touching a private part of the body

If a touch is making you uncomfortable, you can always move away. For example, when you are sitting on someone's lap, or



close to someone, **you can change your mind**. Remember your body belongs only to you. If you were on your grandmother's lap and didn't want to stay there any longer, **you can move away**.

Let's practice this. I'm going to pick you up and make you sit on my lap, and I want you to practice how you can politely move away if you don't want me to carry you anymore. (Practice this, a couple of times.)

#### 4. Rules

Say:

Your teacher taught you 4 very important personal safety rules. I'm going to read them out loud, and let's talk about them some more.

Say:

Rule #1 is "**Tell mom and dad first before you go anywhere**" (even the next room) - *add this according to your discretion.*

Do you tell us before you go anywhere?

What do you do when you are at church and your friends want to play in the basement? (*Ask similar questions based on your context*)

Suggest different scenarios where your child might need to go somewhere, and talk about the best way to let you know, and get your permission in that situation. If your child asks why, explain to them that you want to make sure that they are safe all the time, so you can check if they are fine.

Say:

Rule #2 is “**There are no good secrets.**” Tell your mom and dad. Do you have any secrets? Do your friends tell you secrets and ask you not to share them?

Talk through why secrets can be dangerous.

You can tell a story of a puppy that went to a secret birthday party of a friend, but got lost on the way, and it's mom could not find it. Tell your child that sharing all secrets with their mom and dad will help them to stay safe.

Assure them that nothing they say can get them into too much trouble, that you will always love them and always find a way to help them.

Say:

Rule #3 If someone gives you an unsafe touch or a touch that hurts, you should say, “**No! Stop!**” in your outdoor voice and you should move away.

Let's practice this. I am going to grab your arm tightly and I want you to say “No, stop!” in your outdoor voice and try to move away. Practice this, a couple of times.

Say:

The last rule is- Rule #4 If someone is trying to take you away, you must yell “No! Stop!” in your outdoor voice and move away from them.

That's good. You need to feel like you can shout “No! Stop!” until someone stops and leaves you alone or someone else comes to help.

Tell your child that this is really important, and that you are going to trust them to do this. Ask them if this has happened in the past, or any other experience where they felt uncomfortable.

If your child shares something, reassure them that it will not happen again. And, take steps to prevent such events from occurring in the future. Encourage your child to keep talking to you about their feelings and experiences.

**Say:**

Let's review the rules again:

Rule #1 - "Tell mom and dad first before you go anywhere"

Rule #2 **There are no good secrets.** If anyone tells you a secret, tell mom and dad.

Rule #3 If someone gives me an unsafe touch or a touch that hurts, I say, "No! Stop!" in my outdoor voice and I move away.

Rule #4 If someone is trying to take me away, I must yell "No! Stop!" in my outdoor voice and move away from them.

Any questions about the rules we talked about today? (Wait for response.)

Open activity book to the page "Rules for Personal Safety"

All of the rules we learned today are in your Activity Book. We used words in the book that you know now. We can help you learn any words that are new to you when talking about staying safe. Then you can read your Activity Book by yourself!

**Say:**

You have been a great learner today. Hang your mirror image up so you can see yourself. Maybe you'll hang yours in your room.

**Prayer**

End the session with a time of prayer.

We learned about unsafe touch, and what to do in case someone gives you an unsafe touch. We learned that you must have no secrets from us, your mom and dad, and to tell us whatever you are doing or wherever you are going.

Let's ask God for wisdom to make safe choices and stay safe.