

Introduction to Junior and Senior High School Lessons

The lessons that follow are provided and designed as a general framework for use with a variety of groups of teens. In other words, once you know your group and plan to teach a lesson, review the lesson outlines and select the topics, activities, and prayer resources that best meet the needs of your particular group.

Some catechists have successfully incorporated the junior high curriculum into an extended session with the students; e.g., in the context of a morning or evening retreat experience. Others have divided the lessons into shorter presentations and covered the material in a series of lessons spaced throughout the year rather than all at once. When you are able, use movie clips, music, TV ads, or other media to enhance your presentation.

It is recommended that consideration be given to planning an Orientation Workshop for the adults who are willing to be part of these presentations for junior and senior high students. You may want to incorporate this with a regular catechist or faculty in-service. This will enable the adults to not only have a better grasp of the curriculum but also to express their preference for which areas of the lessons they are most comfortable presenting.

For the lessons for senior high students, the first lesson (labeled “Grade 9”) serves as the foundation lesson which can be built on in subsequent years. Once this lesson has been presented the other lessons/topics can be selected for presentation in any sequence. Be sure to review each lesson plan carefully and select the options that best suit the group you will be working with during the lesson. Selection of the lesson and options needs to include consideration of both the adults involved in presenting the material and the teens participating in the session.

Grades Seven and Eight Safe Environment Lesson

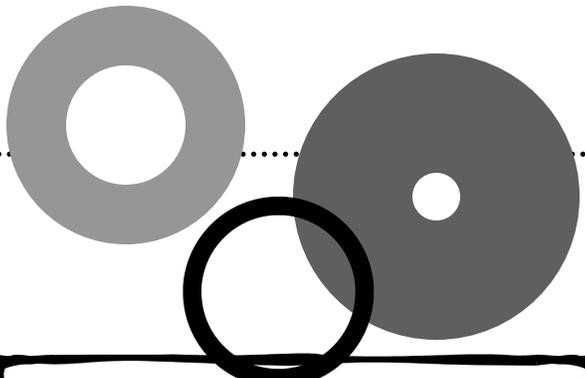
Outcomes

The learner will be able to:

- ✓ Recognize that respect for self and others is grounded in being created in God's image and likeness.
- ✓ Identify potentially dangerous situations.
- ✓ Name ways to steer away from potentially dangerous situations.
- ✓ Identify practical tools for creating a safe environment.

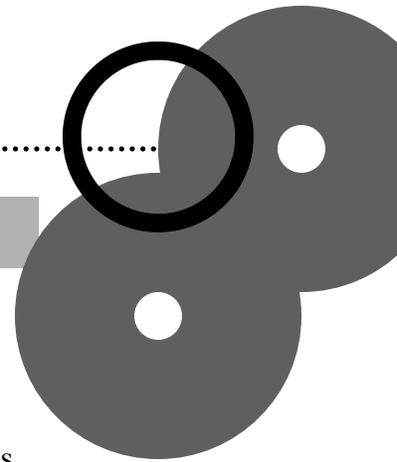
Part One

1. Welcome the students and provide a brief overview of the session.
2. Provide each participant with a copy of the handout "Discussion Starters." Allow 5 minutes for them to complete the handout on their own.
3. Divide the group into smaller groups of 6-8. Allow about 10 minutes for them to share their responses with the group. Be attentive to the groups and try to ensure that they stay on task. Answer questions of clarification that may arise. Share the following points with the whole group:
 - Talking about sexual abuse can be awkward and uncomfortable. Just remember that as you begin your discussions.
 - The purpose of the discussion is to give voice to your own concerns, as well as to listen to the thoughts and concerns of others in hopes of better understanding and becoming more aware of the issues.
4. Gather the students back to the large group and ask for some sampling of answers from each small group. Pay particular attention to the way they ranked the assets that teenagers need to be happy and healthy. Ask what they could do to improve the quality of the assets they chose regardless of how they were rated.
5. Remind everyone that there is no right or wrong answer. This is an opportunity to speak their thoughts and feelings in a safe and trusting environment and to listen to the concerns of others.



Gather the following items for this lesson:

- Pens for each student
- Writing paper for each student
- "Discussion Starter" handout for each student (included-page 6)
- Bible for prayer
- Poster Board (one for each small group—Grade 7 only)
- Markers (an assortment for each small group— Grade 7 only)
- A copy of the closing prayer for each participant (included-page 5)
- A strip of paper for each student (for prayer)



Part Two

Invite the students to return to their small groups. Present the following helpful hints to the group adding your own examples as appropriate.

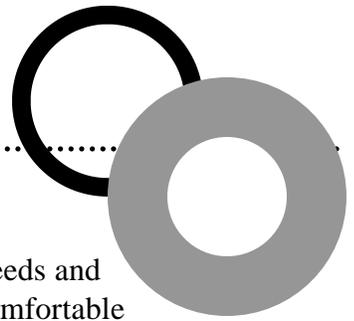
- Nothing we will learn in this session will prevent all young people from ever being harmed in any way. However, there are some tools and tips we can practice that will be beneficial in creating safe and sacred places and that will offer the coping skills necessary to move through a time of crisis.
- Crisis can touch our lives in the form of something such as a failing grade on a test or in a class, a broken friendship, minor mistakes or accidents, or something more serious such as a devastating accident or illness, or even physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Here are some tips and tools you will want to keep in mind for staying safe and for dealing with tough times:

→Practice asking questions.

Spend one entire day thinking of a question for everything you do in that day. Do not rule out any questions. Try to think of everything, from how orange juice is squeezed from oranges to why math was created, from whether you should believe a rumor you heard to how a person is affected by participating in extra-curricular activities. After an entire day of asking questions, you will find that you do not need to ask questions about everything all the time, but certainly you take some things for granted and blindly accept as truth yet do not always know why you accept them. There is often more information to be gained than what you have immediately available to you. Practicing asking questions will get you into the habit of seeking all available resources to help you learn more about something, a habit that will be especially beneficial when a serious situation arises and you need to make an informed decision.

→Trust your instincts.

As you mature into young adulthood, you are becoming more and more aware of the opportunities to make choices for yourself. Along with this opportunity comes the responsibility to surround yourself with people—peers and adults—who will help guide you in making healthy choices. Through prayer and conversation, you can learn about the ways your decisions impact other people—either positively or negatively. You must also trust in the gifts God has given you. Your intuition alerts you when something is not right, your complex mind makes sense of a complicated situation, and your spiritual connection with God provides you the perseverance and strength to carry through difficult times. Practice trusting your feelings by discussing how you feel about something with another person you trust—a parent, sibling, friend, or significant adult. Use journaling to voice your thoughts on paper, and allow the tool of writing to help you unfold and clarify your daily thoughts.



→Be clear about what you want and need.

How simple is it to ask for a new game, a new bike, or new clothes for your birthday or as a holiday gift? What if you were able to voice your internal needs and wants just as clearly and easily? It is okay to tell someone that you feel uncomfortable or want to get out of a situation because it doesn't feel right, whether the situation is lying, stealing, gossiping, or putting someone down. You don't have to do something that goes against what you believe is right just because someone else says you should—even if that someone is an adult. Practice being clear about what you need to be healthy in everyday life situations—how much sleep you need, communicating how you are feeling, wanting to have time alone, or needing help with homework. Communicating what you need has nothing to do with being selfish. In fact, it is self-care to think about and to articulate what your body, mind, and soul need to stay healthy and happy. Look to the significant adults in your life, such as your parents, teachers, or trusted family and friends, to help you balance the difference between need and greed.

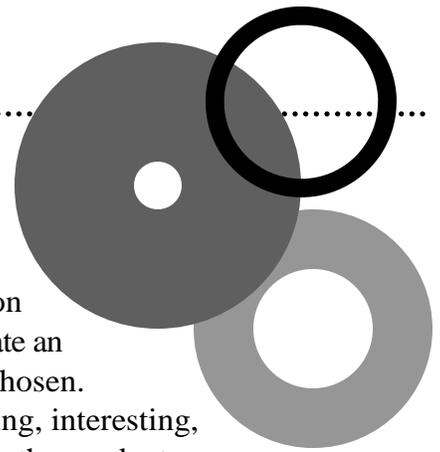
→Get involved.

Being involved in the community does not have anything to do with being popular or being the most active or voted the friendliest or most outgoing. Do not limit yourself because you don't think you deserve to be an active community member. Educate yourself about the different ways you can be involved in the community. Find something that is interesting to you. Take piano lessons outside of school, meet your neighbors, volunteer at a local shelter, baby-sit for family and friends, walk in a benefit race, teach Bible stories to children at your church, tutor peers, or participate in a team or club. Choose something that inspires you or is interesting to you. Being involved serves two main purposes: (1) you get to know other teens and adults who can potentially support you and whom you can potentially trust, and (2) you build your own character, set examples for others, and gain insight into who you are and who you want to be. Community involvement gives you an opportunity to think about your future and your goals.

Ask the participants if they have any additional tips or ideas to offer.
Allow for some discussion if time permits.

Grade 7 Activity

1. Tell the participants that each small group is to create an advertisement for one of the tips they have just heard. Provide each group with a poster board and several markers. Assign each group one of the four tips presented in step 1. It is okay if several groups are assigned the same tip.



2. Tell the groups to imagine they are at a baseball game, riding in a car, surfing the Internet, or reading a magazine. They should create an advertisement for that place or space. Assign one of those locations to each small group, or invite the groups to choose a different location they would like to create an advertisement for. Ask them to create an advertisement that might be found in the location they have chosen. Remind the groups that their advertisement should be engaging, interesting, and informative and that it should make a viewer want to buy the product or service they are promoting. Invite the groups to imagine how they could make their viewers want to have this "product." To make the activity more challenging, tell the groups that the other groups will judge their advertisements for effectiveness and that there will be prizes awarded to the winning advertisements. Give the groups 15 minutes to complete the assigned task.

3. Invite each group to present to the large group the advertisement they have created. Add comments and suggestions where necessary. Consider posting the advertisements in a visible location for parishioners and/or other students to see.

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Grade 8 Activity

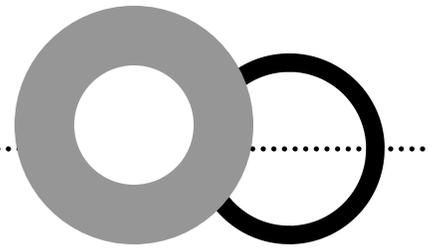
In small groups invite students to write Public Service Announcements (PSA) for TV or radio that would teach other young people some of the things they have learned in this lesson. Encourage them to write out a complete script and then take some time to practice. After about 10-15 minutes, ask them to present their PSA to the class.

Part Three

Closing Prayer: "We Are Signs of God's Presence"

Preparation for prayer:

- A prayer table with Bible (a small basket is optional)
- Strip of paper for each student
- Divide the group into LEFT and RIGHT for the Community Response



PRAYER

We Are Signs of God's Presence

Call to Prayer God, you are the Father of all people.
Thank you for life and for each other.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit
and help us to live as your family.

Reading Galatians 5: 22-23

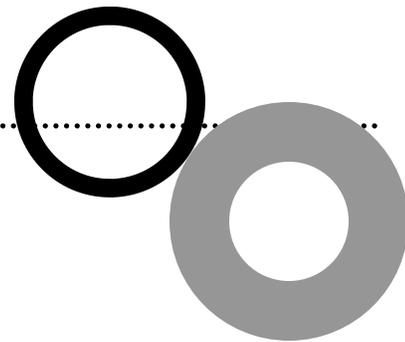
Lead the students in a brief reflection on the fruits (or signs) of the Presence of God's Spirit by slowly repeating each of the fruits in the Scripture passage. Invite them to think about which Fruit of the Holy Spirit they need right now and one way that they can practice it in their daily life. Give each student a strip of paper and have them write on it the Fruit of the Spirit that they need and how they are going to practice it.

When they have finished writing, have the students place their strip of paper on the prayer table (or in the basket).

Community Response The Pentecost Sequence (adapted)

- Left Come to us, Holy Spirit. Come to us, Father of the poor;
come to us, giver of God's gifts; come to us, light of our hearts.
- Right Kind Spirit, you bring us peace and comfort.
If we are tired, you bring us rest; in the heat of temptation, you cool us with
strength; when we are heartbroken, you console us.
- Left Light of the Spirit, shine on our hearts, even into their darkest corners;
for without your help we cannot stay good, and we would choose to do wrong.
- Right Wash us clean; rain down your life on our dry hearts and heal us.
Cherish and warm those with ice-cold hearts,
and guide those who have lost their way.
- Left Give us your gifts because we put our trust in you. Strengthen us to be signs of
your Presence in our world until we come to rest with you forever. Amen.

Conclude with a Sign of Peace and by praying the Our Father



Discussion Starters

I think talking about sexual abuse is (circle one word) . . .

Scary Uncomfortable Gross Important
Necessary Helpful Pointless

Rank the assets that you need to be a healthy and happy teenager:

- ___ caring adults and parents
- ___ patience
- ___ a relationship with God
- ___ a good job
- ___ money
- ___ friends
- ___ trust
- ___ an education

If a friend told me that he or she had been sexually abused as a child, I would...

If someone asked me how I felt about talking to my parents about sex, I would say...

If I were in a situation with someone where I felt uncomfortable and wanted to get out of the situation for my safety, I could say or tell the person...

If that person were an adult, I would...

If someone in my family or community were accused of sexually abusing someone, I would feel . . .