

## Safe Environment Program

*Protecting, Supporting and Educating*

### **About Sexual Abuse**

#### **The Facts of Sexual Abuse**

1. The majority of sexual abusers are known to the victim and their family. However, "stranger danger" is also a possibility.
2. Numerous experts predict that 1 in 3 girls will be sexually abused before age 18 and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused in his youth.
3. Men and women, as well as children and young adults can perform sexual abuse. A majority of molesters are men over age 18.
4. Molesters attain greater power when adults see something, like an 'accidental slip' of the hand, but say nothing to stop or prevent inappropriate behavior.
5. New York State has some of the Nation's strongest child protection laws and conviction for a sexual assault of a child. Conviction can result in extensive jail time.

#### **Identifying Child Molesters:**

1. There are no hard and fast rules about what "makes" a person a child molester. The reality is that sex offenders can be anyone, any gender, any creed, race or age. They can be a family member, a friend or stranger.
2. Child molesters may take on certain types of behavior like having few adult friends, being socially distant with adults, or having keen interest in friendships with minors and doing favors for them or giving gifts.
3. Molesters are sometimes known to 'groom' the children, parents and community – lulling them into a false sense of security and trust. They blend into the surroundings, befriend children and parents alike, and become beyond reproach and blame.
4. Sexual offenders often start young, 'peeping toms' or lewdness starts anywhere from age 8 on and acts/assaults tend to escalate in severity.
5. Offenders are often seeking power over someone weak and trusting. They may or may not maintain 'normal' physical relationships with adults.
6. Misunderstood "non-injury" abuse and actions could include anything from tickling, roughhousing, voyeurism, to wrestling and/or caressing.

#### **Recommended Resources**

**For more information on child abuse, sexual abuse, training and education, visit or contact the following organizations:**

**Childhelp USA®**  
www.childhelpusa.org  
**The Children's Advocacy Center of Manhattan**  
**A project of Childhelp USA®**  
phone: 212-517-3012  
www.childhelpusa.org/manhattan

**Childhelp USA® National Child Abuse Hotline**  
phone: 1-800-4-A-CHILD®  
(1-800-422-4453)

**Prevent Child Abuse America**

## LESSON SUGGESTION FOR JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS

**Objective:** To help youth recognize lures used by those who sexually victimize others via the anonymity of the Internet. To give young teens skills to avoid being victimized by internet sexual predators.

Opening Prayer: "I have formed you and I know you," says the Lord. (Psalm 136)  
Reflect on God who knows us better than anyone and calls us by name.  
No one is anonymous to God.

### Part I (15 min): Watching Out While Having Fun

Ask young people what are some things they like to do for fun?

When we decide to do something for fun, we tend to just do it and only think about the fun it will be. Rarely, if ever, do we think about the dangers that something fun might hold. For example, we think that rollerblading is fun, and it is! But it's more fun when we are aware of and prepare for the dangers inherent in rollerblading. We need to know how to stop, what protective gear to wear, etc. If so, it can be great fun.

What are some of the dangers to be aware of in the things you mentioned above? How many of you think surfing the net and meeting people online is fun?

### Part II (20-25 min): Internet Safety Scenarios

Divide the group into three and give each group one of the following scenarios to talk about. Call the group back together after about 5 minutes to report on what they said.

- A) *You create a screen name by using your first name, last initial and birth date to make it easy for you to remember. It is easy to remember, but is this screen name a good idea? Why or Why not?*
- B) *You are in a chat room and someone starts to talk to you. She says she is your age and lives in a nearby town. At the end of a long conversation, she says she wants to meet with you. You really want to make some new friends and are interested in meeting her. What do you do?*
- C) *You are creating your own website. You want to make it in your personal style. What information should you put on it and what should you avoid putting on it?*

If the young people come up with ideas for internet safety, affirm them, then mention the others they did not come up with. Review some of the dangers and lures that predators use via the anonymity of the internet (see **Appendix**).

### Part III (15 min): Using the Internet Safely

Ask young people to come up with some "Ten Commandments" for online safety. Then fill in what they missed. Talk about the importance of parents in helping them to avoid the dangers of the Internet and to keep their online use safe and fun!

## LESSON SUGGESTION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

**Objective:** To help teens to set appropriate boundaries in their relationships with both adults and peers. To develop skills for addressing situations where boundaries are crossed.

Opening Prayer: I Corinthians 13 (the gift of love).

Part I (25 min): Knowing how to distinguish good/bad in relationships

How do you know when you are in a good relationship?

A good relationship is life-giving. The other person encourages you to grow. It does not demand all your time and attention; you are proud to be with the other person in the circles of your family and friends; you maintain our individuality while in a couple relationship; it is respectful; you feel a comfortable sense of belonging.

How do you know when you are in a bad relationship?

A bad relationship stifles you. It is demanding and possessive. You feel isolated from friends and family and embarrassed by the other person's behavior; you feel trapped and lose a sense of yourself; there is a loss of control over your own choices; it is not respectful of personal boundaries; you feel "disconnected" from yourself and others.

Put young people in groups of two. Ask them to create a scenario of a pair of "friends," a couple or an adult/teen relationship in each of those two categories. Share their scenarios with the large group as time allows.

Part II (15 min): Recognizing boundaries in peer and adult relationships

Define boundaries:

*Boundaries are the physical and emotional limits a person establishes in his/her relationships.* Example of physical boundaries include the comfortable physical distance we determine when we interact with people, when we allow people to touch, hug or kiss us, the sexual boundaries we set. Different cultures determine different physical boundaries. Some cultures accept greeting of others in physically demonstrative ways – with hugs and kisses, even with those they do not know; others accept only minimal eye contact in meeting someone new. It is important to know the culture you are dealing with for appropriate physical boundaries. Most boundaries reflect our personal preferences or our values. Emotional boundaries include limits we establish on what personal information we disclose to others, and how we respect others' self-esteem and feelings. Emotional boundaries are crossed by manipulative behavior, name-calling, sarcasm, ridicule, put-downs. Some people reveal a lot of personal information immediately, while others take longer to get to know. Some people welcome and even expect others to probe into their lives, while others are more "private," choosing to reveal themselves gradually with time and trust.

In good relationships, each individual is respectful of others' boundaries and does not cross them. In bad relationships, boundaries are ignored and people feel uncomfortable and even violated. Sometimes an individual tries to manipulate the other into believing he/she should cross his/her own pre-set boundary. This technique is often used to get others to cross over sexual boundaries.

What are some warning signs that someone is trying to cross your physical or emotional boundaries?

- A person gives you alcohol or drugs.
- A person tries to get you alone or asks you to keep a secret, or threatens if you reveal this.
- A person tries to win you over with gifts, special praise or consideration.
- A person uses conditions to get you to do something you might want. For example, "If you want a good grade, you need to have sex with me."
- A person tries to isolate you from your support system (like friends and family).
- A person is persistent in trying to talk you into what they want, despite you saying no.

You have a right to have your boundaries respected and a responsibility to respect others'. It is important to recognize when a person is trying to cross your boundaries and stop it immediately, even if that person is someone you know and like.

### Part III: (20 min): Refusal and assertive skills for safeguarding boundaries

Give each group these scenarios and ask them to address each. Then choose pairs to role play each of the three in front of the group.

- 1) *A girl/guy wants to date you. S/he is constantly at your locker, at your lunch table and always around, trying to get your attention and get you to accept their invitation for a date. You are feeling your boundaries are being crossed and need to let this person know.*
- 2) *Your girl/boyfriend has been putting you down both in private and in public among friends. He makes fun of your mannerisms by accentuating them and laughing; he makes negative comments about your looks and tells you that you are lucky you have him/her because no one else would want you. You recognize your emotional boundaries are being violated and you need to address this.*
- 3) *An assistant coach you admire seems to favor you over the others. He appears when you are alone in the locker area and has "accidentally" touched your breast and buttocks on a few occasions. You don't want to hurt his feelings and you know he has control over whether you start on the team or not. But his behavior is making you uncomfortable as you recognize that boundaries are being crossed. You need to deal with this.*
- 4) *Your employer calls you at home and talks about her personal life, gives you gifts. It is well known among the other employees that she favors you. It seems she is coming on to you, even though you are 15 years younger. One night she asks you, and only you, to work alone with her until late and promises to bring you home. This makes you uncomfortable, especially when she urges you to tell your parents you are going to a friend's house and will be home by your 1:00 a.m. curfew! You don't want to lose your job, but you know you need to address this.*

Point out through the role play:

- The need to be assertive and use “I feel,” and “I need,” statements.
- To get away from the person violating their boundaries.
- To tell a trusted adult who will help you determine whether or not to pursue this as harassment or abuse.
- The need to address the issue with someone, even if they are an adult in authority and have power over you.
- Teens may be sexually abused by either men or women.
- Teens are as vulnerable to lures as are children, since offenders know how to use lures so effectively and convincingly.
- To know beforehand clearly what your boundaries are, so you are not in a situation to have to determine them under duress.

Optional activities:

- After the session or at a journal time encourage young people to take some quiet time to write down:

My physical boundaries are...

My emotional boundaries are....

- Have young people rewrite I Corinthians 13 in their own way:

Love is . . .

Love is not . . .