

What is Teaching Touching Safety?

Teaching Touching Safety is a program that teaches our children how to recognize unsafe touches and people; how to resist them and most importantly how to report them.

Our children are exposed to a variety of safety programs. Some we teach in our homes, some we get help from outside sources. Safety programs teach children and others how to protect themselves from some danger. Some common safety programs are fire prevention, bike safety, using seat belts, pool safety, crossing the street, D.A.R.E., even drivers education.



Teaching Touching Safety helps children learn appropriate relationship boundaries and how to protect themselves from violators. It is about empowering our children to respond in the best way when those boundaries are violated.

What Teaching Touching Safety is not

Teaching Touching Safety is not sex education. Sex education teaches children how to live as adults in loving, chaste sexual relationships with their marriage partner.

Teaching Touching Safety teaches children to recognize safe and unsafe touches and safe and unsafe adults. They learn to recognize boundaries and when someone is violating their boundaries. It teaches them to report those who violate their boundaries.



What is my role as parent?

Teaching Touching Safety is a parent based program. Parents receive a guide that gives them information on six points of personal safety. Parents decide what and how to teach their children about safe adults and safe touches. Religious education programs or schools will teach two reinforcing lessons. Teachers do not use the parent guide, rather there are two lessons reviewing safe touches, safe adults and boundaries. Children are taught to get help from an adult in difficult or frightening situations.

Teaching Touching safety follows two general principles:

- Children must be able to identify and resist any touch that can harm them - sexual and non-sexual.
- Children must respect their own health and safety and the health and safety of others.

Specifically parents must remember that children must know:

- The correct names for private body parts. (Children will learn those at home, not in school.)
- How to identify safe friends and safe adults.
- The difference between safe and unsafe touches.
- The names of the few special safe adults in their lives.
- What to do if a child, adolescent or adult touches them in an unsafe manner.
- Not to keep secrets about unsafe touches.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why is the Church doing this?

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth requires the Church to train both adults and children in ways to prevent child sexual abuse. Protecting children is not something new to us as Church. The way we are doing it is new. We are now taking a more active role to create safe environments in our parishes and schools.



Q. What is the best way to teach children how to be safe?

A. Current prevention research tells us good programs put child sexual abuse prevention in the general framework of safety. It is more effective when it is taught by someone familiar to the children. The safety lessons should be taught more than once a year. Children should be taught to be assertive and to ask adults for help in difficult or dangerous situations.

Q. Will teachers teach children the names of private body parts?

A. No. Teaching the proper names of body parts is the job of the parent. The reinforcing lessons the schools and religious education classes use cover safe adults, safe touches, and setting boundaries.

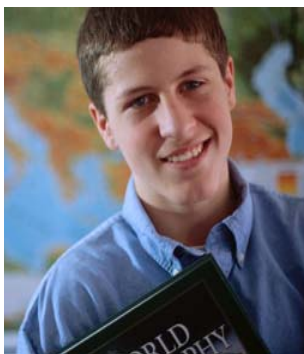
Q. My children are too young to hear this. Aren't you destroying the "innocent period" of their lives?

A. All lessons are age appropriate. Talking to children about boundaries and safe touches is not sexual. We are not talking about sex education, we are talking about personal safety. Keeping children unaware of the dangers around them does not keep them safe. Predators count on children not knowing what to do.



Q. I believe morality should be taught in the home, not in school. Can I opt out of this program?

A. You are right, morality is best taught in the home. But this is personal safety training, not morality class, not sex education. Catholic moral theology compels us to keep children safe. Parents who do not want their children to participate will still get the Parent guide. They may choose not to send their children to the reinforcing lessons.



A Guide to the Touching Safety Program

Diocese of Kalamazoo



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