

3rd—5th Grade

Introduction

Safety is a basic human need. In order for children to develop emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, their basic needs must be met. For this reason, as well as the genuine love and concern we have for our children as members of our family and Children of God, we must commit ourselves to providing a safe environment in which we can teach our children and foster their spiritual growth. It is imperative that the environment we provide not only keeps our children free from physical and emotional harm in general, but also decreases the likelihood that they will become victims of abuse. Child abuse, sexual abuse in particular, occurs when an adult with a tendency toward abuse has contact with children in a context where environmental / social inhibitions are compromised and the child's resistance has been lowered.

The following curriculum was designed to be a routine part of our education with children, both to promote and model safe environment principles and to build resistance to abuse by teaching our children about right relationships and what to do when something is not right. It is the goal of this curriculum to provide children with direct education about right relationships and to educate them through teachable moments in our relationships with them.

Overview

This module is designed for use during the first regular class session. It introduces the Code of Conduct that guides adult interactions with youth, in the context of a discussion of God's rules, Church rules / Tradition, and establishment of classroom rules. If children are clear about the rules adults are expected to follow and how such rules are protective of them, they will be more resistant to efforts of a potential perpetrator to bend the rules.

Student involvement in the identification of clear expectations during the first class period helps increase their compliance with the rules and promote a safe environment by decreasing potentially harmful incidents of child behavior and increasing the likelihood that positive reinforcement versus punitive strategies for maintaining the educational environment can be utilized. Finally, an environment of open communication is established as children are allowed input into the development of classroom rules, and encouraged to communicate their feelings and seek help when feeling pressured to break the rules.

Objectives

- Introduce students to the classroom setting, catechist, and each other.
- Introduce the concept of rules as protective, pro-social, and consistent with God's teaching
- Establish classroom rules and review adult code of conduct.
- Encourage communication when a child feels pressure to break the rules.

Session Outline

- Introductions
- Opening Prayer
- Why Do We Have Rules?
- What Are God's Rules / the Rules of God's Church?
- Establishment of Classroom Rules
- Code of Conduct
- Communication
- Remembering the Rules
- Closing Prayer

KNOW THE RULES
for Adult/Child Interactions

Avoid being **Alone**
USE POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT
-NOT CRITICISM, COMPETITION, OR COMPARISON

No Physical Punishment
Don't Give or Accept **Expensive Gifts**

NO ALCOHOL, DRUGS, OR TOBACCO

KEEP CLEAR **BOUNDARIES**
Report Suspected Abuse
Don't **Humiliate, Ridicule**
Threaten or Degrade

PRACTICE **GOOD COMMUNICATION**
BE PATIENT
TREAT EVERYONE WITH RESPECT
SHOW COURTESY, DIGNITY. CARE

The Diocese of Grand Island
Child Protection Office
(308)382-6565

Supplies

- Chalkboard and chalk –or- Flip chart and markers
- Pens, pencils, crayons or markers and Poster-board (magazines, scissors, glue -optional) for “Our Class Rules” activity
- Beach ball and permanent marker for optional activity “Know the Rules for Adult / Child Interactions Beach Ball”
- Yarn or String and scissors for optional activity “Personal Space”

Activities / Hand Outs

“Our Class Rules,” “Know the Rules for Adult/ Child Interactions,” “When to Say ‘No’ to an Adult,” “How to Say ‘No’ to an Adult”

Optional Activities

“Know the Rules for Adult / Child Interactions” Beach Ball.
“Personal Space,” “How to Say ‘No’ to an Adult Activity Sheet.”

I. Introductions

- Welcome each child as they enter the classroom by introducing yourself.
- Introduce the regular curriculum / theme for the year / semester if applicable.
- Have each child introduce themselves to the group.

II. Opening Prayer

Dear God,
 Thank you for bringing us together as we begin a new year of Religious Education. Please be with us as we get to know each other and plan our year together. Help me to listen and share in our discussion today. In your name we pray.
 Amen

“...Whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”
 Matthew 5:19

III. Discussion: Why Do We Have Rules?

Pose the question: “Why do we have rules?”

Write responses on the chalkboard / flipchart.

(You are likely to get responses such as “so things are fair,” “so no one gets hurt,” “to keep everyone safe,” “to help everyone get along,” “to create a good learning environment,” etc...)

If no one identifies “safety, positive learning environment, helping people get along, etc” be sure to add them in some form.

Save the list to refer to in later activities.

IV. What Are God’s Rules?

Ask: “What are God’s rules?” Discuss the Ten Commandments

Optional Activity

“The Ten Commandments “

Divide students into teams. Challenge the teams to be the first to write down all ten commandments.

Ask: “What is the Golden Rule?” “Can anyone tell me where it comes from?”

Discuss “the Golden Rule” In the Gospel, Jesus tells us to “Love your neighbor as yourself” We should treat others how we want to be treated.

V. Establishment of Classroom Rules

Ask students: “What rules do you have at school / at home?”

Record responses on the board.

State: “We need to set some rules for this class.”

Point to rules written on the board and ask: “Which of these rules do you think we should use in our classroom?”

What other rules do you think we need?” **Circle from / add to the previous list.**

Where possible, regroup and rephrase the rules identified by your class to resemble the general rules of your religious education program, etc.

Note: Most rules fall under a few categories that can be objectified with specific examples (e.g. Keep hands and feet to yourself / respect other’s space, etc are categories that include a variety of physical acting out behaviors; Respect others feelings / use respectful language covers use of appropriate / non-offensive language vs. name calling or ridicule, etc.; Create a good learning environment would include listening, taking turns, raising your hand, being quiet, etc).

This is a useful activity as it helps the students better understand the general rules and helps them feel connected as they see that the rules identified by the adult authorities are the same rules they identified as a class.

Summarize the rules for the class and write them on a poster-board that will remain in the classroom throughout the year.

You may wish to have each child draw or cut out a picture that illustrates an example of each rule, or have students decorate the poster to increase their ownership.

Activity

“Our Class Rules”

In this activity, students make their own list of the classroom rules and draw or cut out pictures to illustrate an example of each. Students may need adult assistance to label each picture with the rule it represents. This is an important activity as it increases retention of the rules as well as providing “take home” information to share with parents.

VI. Code of Conduct

State: “The adults who work with you have agreed to follow some rules too.”

Handout:

“Know the Rules for Adult/ Child Interactions”

Give each child a copy of the handout. Read the rules together.

Optional Activity: “Know the Rules for Adult / Child Interactions” Beach Ball.

Write the Rules for Adult / Child Interactions on a beach ball in random places, covering the ball. In class, throw the ball to a student, ask them to read / explain / and/or give an example of the rule that their right hand is touching / closest to. When they have done so, have them throw the ball to another student. Repeat until all rules are covered, or until all students have had a turn.

Be sure to discuss the following rules:

Treat Everyone with Respect.

State: “We are all created in God’s image and deserving of dignity and respect.” “The adults who work with you have agreed to treat you with dignity and respect.”

Ask: “What does it mean to treat someone with respect?”

Write down responses on the board. If not one says, “using appropriate language; avoiding threats or harm; not ridiculing, humiliating, or degrading, etc.” add these.

Use Positive Reinforcement and Logical Consequences / Avoid Physical Punishment.

State: “One way adults can show respect is by using positive reinforcement and logical consequences.” “Respecting young people doesn’t mean letting them do whatever they want; after all, we have rules for reasons, right?” “Sometimes you may need a reminder to follow the rules.” “We can remind you in a respectful way by rewarding you when you are doing a good job, or by giving you a consequence when you are breaking the rules.” “Logical consequences are ones that make sense with regard to the rule that was broken. They aren’t ‘extreme’ and they aren’t punitive, harmful, or degrading.” “The adults who work with you won’t use physical punishment, like spanking or other things that may be hurtful.”

Keep Clear Boundaries

State: “Boundaries are the lines that separate one thing from another. “

Ask: How many of you play a sport like soccer? What does it mean when someone or something is “out of bounds?”

State: It means that the boundary line was crossed. You have boundary lines too— where your body ends and something else begins. (To illustrate you may chose to draw around a toy, doll, or adult volunteer, making a line image on paper.)

State: “The adults who work with you will try not to cross your boundaries.” “Just as you are expected to respect your classmates’ boundaries by keeping your hands and feet to yourself, etc., the adults here won’t hit or spank you and they won’t touch you without your ok.

Optional Activity: “Personal Space”

For this activity, assign partners. Give each pair a ball of yarn / string. Have them stand several feet away, one holding the end of the string, the other holding the ball of string. Instruct the partner with the ball of string to take one step at a time closer to their partner , rolling up the yarn as they go, until their partner says, “stop.’ Instruct the other partner to tell their partner to stop when they begin to feel uncomfortable with how close they are. Cut off the remaining length of string to represent the amount of “personal space” the individual is comfortable with. Have partners switch roles. When all have a length of string that represents their “personal space,” compare the strings. Point out that everyone is comfortable with a different amount of space between themselves and others. This is their “personal space.” Keeping clear boundaries includes respecting the “personal space” of others.

VII. What to do if you feel pressure to break the rules.

State: “It is important to tell an adult if you feel pressure to break the rules or if someone else is breaking the rules...especially if the person breaking the rules is an adult. The rules are there to keep you safe and help you learn.”

“Sometimes you may also need to take a stand in order to be safe.” “You may need to say ‘no’ to the person who is pressuring you to break the rules.”

Distribute: “When to Say ‘No’ to an Adult” handout.

Discuss: Scenarios “When to Say ‘No’ to an Adult”

Activity: “How to Say ‘No’ to an adult.”

In this activity, assist students in thinking of examples of each strategy for saying ‘No.’ Remind students to use these strategies in situations where they need to say ‘No’ to follow the rules or to be safe. **State:** “Everyone is made in God’s image and deserving of respect. For this reason, it is important to be respectful—even when you need to say ‘No’.”

VIII. Remembering the Rules

After establishing classroom rules, it is important to identify how your students will remember the rules and be motivated to follow them. Classroom discussion may help you arrive at a strategy for implementing rules in your classroom.

Ask the students, “What helps you remember rules? What happens if you don’t follow the rules at school? At home?” Encourage students to brainstorm ways to remember the rules.

Record student responses. If no one identified “consequences” as a motivation / reminder for following rules, add “We sometimes we need to experience consequences to remember to follow the rules.

Re-define student responses to match regular consequences of your program if possible.

Additional Strategies

Post rules in the classroom, give a warning or reminder, review rules before each class, use reinforcement strategies such as: “Sticker / Star Chart” – It can be motivating for children when their individual compliance with rules is acknowledged on a chart (similar to an attendance record).

“Marble Jar” – A marble jar is a form of classroom reinforcement – when class members are doing an especially good job of following the rules add a marble to the jar. When the jar is full, celebrate with a special class activity / privilege / reward.

IX. Closing Prayer

Lord,

Thank you for the rules you have given to guide us. We are thankful for rules to keep us safe, to help us get along, to make us all feel welcome and accepted. Please help us to follow our classroom rules so we all have the opportunity to learn more about you and our Catholic faith. Give us courage to share our feelings and ask for help if we feel pressure to break the rules.

In your name we pray.
Amen.

Activity Sheets and Handouts

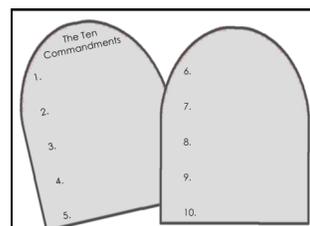
Handout: Know the Rules for Adult/ Child Interactions



Activity: Our Class Rules

Our Class Rules

Optional Activity:
The Ten Commandments



Handout: When to Say ‘No’ to an Adult



Handout: How to Say ‘No’ to an Adult



Optional Activity:
How to Say ‘No’ to an Adult

Handout: How to Say 'No' to an Adult. A worksheet with a light blue header. It contains a list of 10 scenarios and a space for the student to write their response. The scenarios are: 1. Ask me 'No!', 2. Give an excuse, 3. I need to go home, 4. I need to check this out, 5. I need to ask my teacher, 6. I want to ask my parents, 7. I need to go home, 8. I need to check this out, 9. I need to ask my teacher, 10. I want to ask my parents.

Additional Supplemental Activities can be found at: <http://www.gidiocese.org/childprotection/education.php>
Resource Sheets: Safety and Boundaries