

6th—8th 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"
- Pens / Pencils for optional activity "How to Say 'No' Activity Sheet"

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
"How to Say 'No' to an Adult" Activity Sheet

I. Introductions

- **Welcome each student as they enter the classroom by introducing yourself.**
- **Introduce the regular curriculum / theme for the year / semester if applicable.**
- **Have each student 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.

Activity:

“Rules and Reasons”

Youth match the “Rules for Adult / Child Interactions” with the reasons for each rule. Discuss the reason behind each rule as youth work on this activity.

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 and give the reason for 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:

Don't Give or Accept Expensive Gifts.

Ask: “Why do you suppose this is a rule?” “Who gives you expensive gifts?” “How would you feel if someone you didn't know well gave you a very expensive gift?”

State: “The adults who work with you will try to treat you equally / fairly.” “They won't single any of you out with special gifts or privileges.”

Ask: “Has anyone heard of the word ‘enticements’?” “What does it mean to ‘entice’ someone?” “How about the word ‘lure’?”

Explain: “Lures and enticements are things, like gifts, special privileges, or access to restricted objects or activities that someone may use to lure or entice another person into doing something they want them to do. (Like how a fishing lure gets the attention of a fish and lures the fish into swallowing the hook.)” “Adults who have a motivation to harm or abuse children sometimes use enticements to “lure” children / youth into developing a relationship with them.” “Think about it...have you ever wanted something so much that you would do almost anything to get it?... Have you ever felt like you owed someone because they gave you a gift or an opportunity you couldn't have obtained for yourself?”

Don't Use Alcohol or Drugs

Ask: “Why do you think this is a rule?” “What could be a problem with adults using alcohol or other drugs when they are working with children and youth?”

You may get responses such as, “the kids might get access to it, they could get charged with procuring for a minor, etc.” **Reinforce responses suggesting that alcohol or other drugs could serve as enticements.**

Ask: “What happens when a person uses alcohol or other drugs?” **Reinforce answers that suggest that alcohol or drugs alter one's mood, thinking, or behavior.** **Explain:** “Alcohol and other drugs alter our mood and our thinking. They can impair our judgment when we are making decisions.” “We want the adults who are working with you to use their very best judgment when they are with you..”

Report Abuse

Explain: “The adults who work with you are legally required to report abuse. “ “If an adult has reason to believe that a minor has been abused (physically, emotionally, or sexually) they are mandated to make a report to legal authorities.”

Ask: “Why do you suppose this is the law in our state?”

Explain: “Adults have a great deal of control in the lives of children. They control most of the resources, have the power to instill consequences, and often can control a child's access to help.” “It is the responsibility of all adults to look out for the well-being of minors, so that no adult is using their power / control to harm or take advantage of them.”

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

State: “It is important to get help 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.” “As a friend it is important to know where to go for help if you see a friend being pressured to break rules.” “Think about who the trusted adults are in your life whom you would turn to if you needed help.”

State: “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 and “How to Say ‘No’ to an Adult” handout.

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

Optional 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.’”

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.

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.

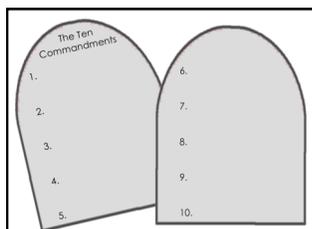
Ask the students, “What helps you remember rules? What happens if you don’t follow the rules at school? At home?” Encourage students to brainstorm ways to remember the rules.

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.**

Activity Sheets and Handouts

Activity: Our Class Rules

Optional Activity:
The Ten Commandments



Handout:
Know the
Rules for
Adult/ Child
Interactions



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

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