

## **For the Classroom - Formation in Christian Chastity, Grade 8**

### **Grade 8 - Lesson Plan 1**

#### **Theme: Love and Responsibility**

##### **Objectives:**

1. Students will learn that in the sacrament of Marriage, the husband and wife are called to make a total gift of self, one to the other.
2. Students will know that sex (the marital act), must always be open to life and love, and it is reserved for the sacrament of Marriage.
3. Students will understand that any sexual act outside of marriage is a serious sin.

**Note:** If a student asks what the marital act is, the teacher or catechist should simply state that it is the act by which a husband and wife give themselves totally to one another, body and soul, and that this act is so good and powerful, that God sometimes chooses to create a new human being through it. The biological explanation is reserved to parents.

Begin by noting that every year the Church sets aside the month of October as “Respect Life” month. Tell the children that you are going to talk to them about the best way to show their respect for themselves, others and God. This is by living a life of chastity.

Tell the story of the Martins given below.

##### **Louis and Azelie-Marie Martin:**

Louis and Azelie–Marie Martin were the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux. They lived in France in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At one time, Louis had desired to be a priest and Azelie-Marie, a religious sister. Eventually the two met, fell in love, and were married. Together they had nine children, seven girls and two boys. Of these, five of the girls lived to adulthood and all of them became religious sisters, four of them Carmelites.

Louis and Azelie were devoted to God, to each other, and to their children. Both endured much suffering, with Azelie dying while still a young woman. Louis lived a relatively long life, but endured much suffering in his last years. The couple passed on a great love of the Church and of purity to their children, the most famous of whom is Marie Therese, who is now known as St. Therese of Lisieux, or simply, “The Little Flower.”

St. Therese is one of the most popular saints in the Church. She wrote a famous autobiography entitled *The Story of a Soul*, in which she expresses that the way she found to holiness was “the little way” of confidence (in God) and love of Him in the heart of the Church. She is Patroness of Missions and, in 1997, was proclaimed as a “Doctor of the Church.” In her writings, St. Therese tells us of her parents’ deep love of God and of the beautiful example of true Christian love, devotion, and piety they set for their children.

(Have the following prayer, Scripture and Catechism quotes, and “Key Concepts” Reading on a handout for the children.)

Recite the prayer together. Then have the children read the quotes from the Scripture and Catechism, out loud, taking turns. Then, have the children read the “Key Concepts” Reading silently to themselves. Give them about 5 minutes for this.

**Opening Prayer:** O Holy and Undivided Trinity, we thank You for establishing the sacrament of marriage. Please bless us, and our families. Please bless all families! You gave abundant grace to the Martin family, so that the flower of holiness might blossom from their love. Please give us and our families abundant graces that we, too, may be chaste and holy people, that we may be saints! We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus, and through the intercession of Mary, our Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, and St. Therese. Amen.

**Quotations from Sacred Scripture:**

*Then God said: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.” God created man in his image, in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying to them: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth.”* (Genesis 1: 26 –28)

*The LORD God said: “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.” So the LORD God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each of them would be its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man. So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The LORD God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said: “This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called ‘woman,’ for out of ‘her man’ this one has been taken.” That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.* (Genesis 2: 18-25)

**Quotations from the Catechism of the Catholic Church:**

*God who created man out of love also calls him to love – the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love. Since God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. It is good, very good, in the Creator’s eyes. And this love which God blesses is intended to be fruitful and to be realized in the common work of watching over creation: “And God blessed them, and God said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.’”* (1604)

*Holy Scripture affirms that man and woman were created for one another: "It is not good that the man should be alone." The woman, "flesh of his flesh," his equal, his nearest in all things, is given to him by God as a "helpmate;" she thus represents God from whom comes our help. "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." The Lord himself shows that this signifies an unbreakable union of their two lives by recalling what the plan of the Creator had been in the beginning. "So they are no longer two, but one flesh." (1605)*

**"Key Concepts" Reading:**

God created man and woman in His own image, giving them great personal dignity. We were created to live in relationship with each other and to make a gift of ourselves to others. In the sacrament of marriage, the husband and wife are called to make a total gift of themselves to each other through the marital act. The marital act must always be open to life and love and it is reserved for marriage. True marriage can exist only between one man and one woman. There can never be a true marriage between a man and a man, or between a woman and a woman.

Sexual acts outside of marriage are grave sins. Some of these sins include adultery, premarital sex, and any other act intended to sexually arouse oneself or another. Use of pornographic materials is also sinful. Homosexual acts are always gravely sinful. If a person has committed a sexual sin, it needs to be confessed in the sacrament of Penance. This sacrament gives the grace and strength to live purely in the future. Each person must cooperate with this grace through prayer, going to Mass every Sunday and on holy days of obligation, regularly going to Confession, and by making the effort to live a good and holy life.

**Discussion Questions:**

- Question: Of the creatures on earth, which are made in God's image and likeness?  
Answer: Of all of God's creatures on the earth, the only one's made in His image are human beings.
- Question: What does it mean that we are made in God's image and likeness?  
Answer: It means that we are made to live in communion with others, similar to the way that the three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity live in communion with one another. It also means that, like God, we have an intellect, which is the ability to think, judge, and understand, and that we have a will, which is the ability to deliberately choose or act based upon our understanding. Because of our freedom, we can choose either good or evil. God always wants us to choose the good and gives us the grace to do so, but he will not override our free will. He made us persons with freedom, not pre-programmed robots.
- Question: Who was the first married couple?  
Answer: Adam and Eve. (Jesus refers to this when speaking of marriage and the plan of God for human living. See Mark 10: 1-10.)
- Question: True or False: True marriage can only exist between a man and a woman.  
Answer: True
- Question: To what must the marital act always be open?  
Answer: To life and love

**Activities:**

Ask the students to name some married saints. How did these holy men and women make a gift of their lives to God, to each other, and to the Church? Note: You will want to get a good book of saints and in your class preparation look up examples of saints who were married. There are many such examples: Our Lady, St. Joseph, St. Monica, St. Stephen of Hungary, St. Bridget of Sweden, St. Louis of France, St. Gianna Beretta Molla, St. Thomas More, and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, to name just a few.

The Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph provide an example of a grace-filled marriage. List some of the virtues that are important to a grace-filled marriage. How do these same virtues help those who have a vocation to the priesthood, religious life, or single life? How do these virtues help us to live lives of chastity?

**Summary:**

So far you have learned that in the sacrament of Marriage the husband and wife are called to make a total gift of self. You know that the marital act must always be open to life and love, and this is reserved for the sacrament of Marriage. Any sexual act outside of marriage is gravely sinful. However, God always gives us the grace to live chaste lives. We gain this grace primarily from Mass and the sacraments, through prayer, keeping the commandments, and through virtuous acts. If a person has fallen into sin, he should never despair. God's love and mercy are without limit. He always wants to reconcile us to Himself and He does this through the sacrament of Confession.

**Closing Prayer:** Pray the third Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, the Nativity, for the intention of holy families, modeled after the family of Nazareth.

(Closing prayer may be omitted if both lessons are taught on the same night.)

## **For the Classroom - Formation in Christian Chastity Program, Grade 8**

### **Grade 8 - Lesson Plan 2**

#### **Theme: Love and Responsibility**

##### **Objectives:**

1. Students will learn what constitutes real freedom, and that chastity is necessary if one is to truly be free.
2. Students should understand that appropriate relationships at this stage will include friendships with members of the same and opposite sex, and will exclude dating.
3. Students will know the importance of dressing and acting modestly.
4. Students should understand that abuse is always wrong and that if anyone abuses or treats them in a degrading manner, they should immediately tell a parent or trusted adult.

Continuing your discussion of Chastity and Respecting Life. Tell the children you are going to tell another story about a saint, St. Maria Goretti.

##### **St. Maria Goretti:**

St. Maria Goretti lived in Italy from 1890 – 1902. She was a cheerful girl, known to her friends and family for her love of God. When she was twelve years old, a young man, Allesandro, who was boarding with her family, stabbed her fourteen times because she resisted his attempts to seduce her. As Maria attempted to defend herself, she reminded her attacker that he was committing a terrible sin and could go to hell. Maria survived for two days after the attack, during which time she forgave Allesandro and asked God to forgive him. While he was in prison for this awful crime, Maria appeared to him in a dream in which she forgave him and handed him fourteen white lilies, one for each stab wound. This caused him to completely reform his life. His first act after his thirty-year prison sentence was to visit Maria's mother, Assunta, and beg her forgiveness. She did forgive him. They were present together for Maria's canonization in Rome by Pope Pius XII in 1950.

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Saint Maria Goretti, you have given us a beautiful example of heroic purity and forgiveness. Help us and our families to love chastity and forgiveness. Through your prayers and intercession help us and our families to always be close to God and to receive His divine protection. Amen.

(Prayer may be omitted if both lessons are being taught on the same night.)

##### **Review:**

So far, you've learned that marriage is a sacrament instituted by God in which one man and one woman are to make a complete gift of themselves to the other and that their married love is to always remain open to life and love. The marital act is reserved for

marriage. Any sexual act outside of marriage is gravely sinful. Going to Mass every Sunday and on holy days of obligation, receiving the Holy Eucharist frequently, and going regularly to Confession helps us to continue to live purely, or to be reconciled to God and the Church if one has fallen into grave sin. Now you will learn what real freedom is; that this is a time for you to cultivate friendships, but not to date; and the importance of modest speech, dress, and behavior.

(Have a handout for the children with the following quotations and “Key Concept” Reading. Have the children read the quotations out loud, taking turns, but have them read the reading to themselves, silently.)

**Quotations from Sacred Scripture:**

*Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.*  
(1 Corinthians 6: 18-20)

*For God did not call us to impurity but to holiness.* (1 Thessalonians 4:7)

**Quotations from the Catechism of the Catholic Church:**

*Freedom makes man responsible for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary.*  
(1734)

*The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to “the slavery of sin.”* (1733)

*The virtue of chastity blossoms in friendship. It shows the disciple how to follow and imitate him who has chosen us as his friends, who has given himself totally to us and allows us to participate in his divine estate. Chastity is a promise of immortality. Chastity is expressed notably in friendship with one’s neighbor. Whether it develops between persons of the same or opposite sex, friendship represents a great good for all. It leads to spiritual communion.* (2347)

*Purification of the heart demands prayer, the practice of chastity, purity of intention and of vision.* (2532)

**“Key Concepts” Reading:**

God’s love for us includes freedom. True freedom means the freedom to do what is good and right. Because we are free, we are responsible for our acts. We cannot be truly free if we are not living chastely and purely.

Dating is inappropriate until you are able to maturely evaluate your relationships with others. If you begin dating too early, it is difficult to resist the pressures others may put on you. This is the time to happily enjoy friendships without the pressures of dating.

The virtue of modesty helps us to preserve the integrity of our person. We should avoid public discussions of private matters. If this happens, we should change the subject. If that is impossible, we should excuse ourselves from the conversation. We must look away from immodest images, people, and things. It is always sinful to use pornography, whether in pictures, magazines, or the Internet. Television, movies, and music that have immoral themes can be an occasion of sin. We should search out movies and TV shows with wholesome, moral themes.

It is always sinful to physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse anyone, or to treat them in a degrading manner. It is always wrong for anyone to physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse you or treat you in a degrading manner. If this happens, tell a parent or trusted adult.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Question: True freedom means the freedom to do what?

Answer: True freedom means the ability to do what is good and right.

Question: True or False: By this stage of my life, I am mature enough to date.

Answer: False. At this stage in my life I should be enjoying friendships with people without the pressures of dating.

Question: What should we do if people are having a discussion of an impure subject or telling an impure joke?

Answer: You should either change the subject or excuse yourself from the conversation.

Question: True or False: It is always sinful to use pornography.

Answer: True, the use of pornography is always evil. Pornography degrades all those who are involved with it in any way.

**Note to teachers:** If a student asks if it is a sin if a person accidentally comes across an impure or pornographic image, the answer is no, since the act of committing a sin, by definition, involves a deliberate choice. However, if an impure image accidentally comes across one's line of vision, that person then has a moral responsibility to avert his gaze from the impure image.

Question: What should a person do if he is a victim of abuse?

Answer: Immediately tell a parent or a trusted adult.

### **Activities:**

Make sure every student has a Bible. If there are not enough Bibles for everyone, have them share with a partner. Students are to read 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7. Every time that St. Paul uses the word "love," such as "Love is patient, love is kind," students are to silently insert the name of a friend in place of the word "love." So, for instance, the student has a friend named "Jane." The student would silently read, "Jane is patient, Jane is kind."

Tell them to think about (but not to share aloud) if they think their friend is patient, kind, not jealous, not inflated, not rude, does not seek their own interests, is not quick-tempered, etc. This activity is complementary to the "examination of conscience" they did using the same passage in sixth grade and it is a good way to evaluate a friendship.

They may also follow this up by once again silently inserting their own name as they did in sixth grade.

Ask the students to reflect on a movie they have seen recently. Each student should ask himself the following questions:

1. What was the theme of the movie?
2. Was it a moral theme?
3. Did the characters in the movie treat others with dignity and charity?
4. Did the characters in the movie use others or treat them in a degrading manner?
5. Did the characters in the movie behave in a chaste and modest way?
6. Does this movie help or hinder my spiritual growth?

**Summary:**

Today you have learned about freedom, what a gift it is and the responsibilities that come with it. You have also learned that this stage in your life is for building and deepening true friendships with the same and opposite sex without the pressures of dating. You know that modesty involves keeping private things private, whether in dress or in conversation. You know that the use of pornography is a grave evil which degrades people and which has destroyed many marriages and families. It must be avoided! Finally you have learned that abuse is always sinful. You must never abuse another in any way and it is never acceptable for anyone to abuse you. If this happens, immediately tell a parent or a trusted adult. Remember the two great commandments. "The first and greatest is this: That you must love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind and all your soul and all your strength. The second is like it: You must love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:29)

**Closing Prayer:** Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us!

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!

St. Joseph, pray for us!

St. Maria Goretti, pray for us!

St. Gianna Beretta Molla, pray for us!

St. Dominic Savio, pray for us!

St. Therese of Lisieux, pray for us!

St. Thomas Aquinas, Patron of Catholic Schools and of Chastity, pray for us!

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, help and protect us and our families!



## **For the Classroom – Safe Environment Program, Grade 8**

**Note:** It is recommended that those who will be teaching this lesson first read *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* by the Pontifical Council for the Family before presenting this material. The dignity of the human person as laid out in the primary and intermediate grades is the foundation of our Safe Environment program.

**Prayer:** Please Read Psalm 139:1-18 together in class.

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will understand their dignity as children of God.
2. Students will understand virtue and vice.
3. Students will know practical steps for protecting themselves from sexual abuse.
4. Students will know how to react to abuse and to the possible threat of abuse.

### **Teaching Points:**

**Note:** While an understanding of the dignity of the human person, as well as the nature of virtue and vice are foundational, it is in no way to be implied that those who are the victims of abuse are to blame – or that they have been abused because they were not behaving in a chaste, virtuous manner.

### **Our Dignity as Children of God**

Every human person is created in the image of God. This amazing dignity bestowed on the human race was raised even higher when God became man and died out of love for the salvation of every person. Because of the dignity with which we were created, and the love by which we were redeemed on the cross, all people deserve to be revered and treated with dignity. We have an obligation to uphold the dignity of ourselves and of one another, especially the most helpless among us (children both before and after birth, the sick, the poor, and the elderly).

### **Virtue**

The class should read paragraph 1804 from the Catechism of the Catholic Church on virtue and the students should write out the definition of virtue from the Catechism.

### **The Cardinal Virtues**

The Cardinal Virtues are the virtues of Prudence, Justice, and Temperance, and Fortitude. The word Cardinal comes from the Latin word *cardine*, which means hinge. They are called the “hinge” virtues because every other natural virtue is based upon and grows from the Cardinal Virtues.

- Prudence - discovering our true good and choosing the right means of achieving it
- Fortitude/Courage - firmness in the pursuit of the good
- Justice - giving the proper due to God and neighbor
- Temperance - moderating the attraction of the pleasures of the senses

### **The Virtue of Chastity**

The virtue of chastity grows from the virtue of temperance. “*Chastity is the spiritual power which frees love from selfishness and aggression*” and is needed due to the effects of original sin (*Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 16). In developing the virtue of chastity, through a proper understanding of the dignity of each person and through effort and practice, we look upon a person and treat him with respect and dignity, rather than as an object for sexual pleasure (lust). Chastity is a life-long process of self-mastery involving training in modest behavior, protection of the senses, fidelity to prayer, reception of the sacraments and wise guidance. For young people and unmarried adults, it involves a firm commitment to avoid situations that are likely to inflame sexual desire. Purity in thought, word and deed are essential for chastity.

The sacred gift of marital union is to be reserved for spouses in the sacrament of Marriage. Until the point of committing themselves totally to one another before God, any pre-marital sexual activity amounts to using the other person for personal gratification and pleasure. Therefore, these sins against purity and chastity are not expressions of genuine love, even if they “feel” loving. The usual consequences of sins against chastity include guilt, loss of innocence, greater selfishness, damage to a future marriage, risk of disease, pregnancy outside of marriage, rift in relationship with parents, depression and, most importantly, loss of our relationship with and love for God (CCC 2337-2351, 2514-2533). God has given us a plan for authentic love and chastity that guards against using other persons and that protects marriage, family and the dignity of the human person.

### **Vice**

“A vice is a bad moral habit. Technically a vice is the strong tendency to a gravely sinful act acquired through frequent repetition of the same act. Qualities that characterize a vice are spontaneity, ease, and satisfaction in doing what is morally wrong” (*Modern Catholic Dictionary*, John A. Hardon, S.J., 561). While virtue forms a person, vice “de-forms” a person.

Students should write down the definition of vice from the glossary of the Catechism. Spiritual direction and counseling are essential for abandoning some vices. A total and permanent separation from the near occasion of sin is necessary for someone who has struggled with a vice that can significantly damage his life and the lives of others.

**Students are to be taught that they should avoid those adults who would seek to do the following:**

1. Discourage other adults from participating or monitoring youth activities
2. Frequently want to be alone with young people
3. Are more excited to be with young people than adults
4. Give gifts to children or young people, often without permission
5. Seek contact that is not respectful of a young person’s comfort zone, for example with unwanted hugs

6. Frequently want to wrestle or tickle
7. Think the rules do not apply to them
8. Allow young people to engage in activities their parents would not allow
9. Use bad language or tell inappropriate jokes and stories
10. Show pornography

### **Avoiding Potential Danger**

Avoiding potential danger means that we must be careful to avoid situations that could make us vulnerable to harm. How can we avoid potential harm?

1. By using the “2 by 2” principle. When with an adult or with people your own age (including dates) always be with a friend on whom you can depend.
2. By making sure your parents know of any regular meetings or correspondence (such as email) with an adult.
3. By talking to your parents. Let them know where you are at all times.
4. By avoiding drugs and alcohol. You are never less safe than when you are intoxicated. Avoid others who are intoxicated. Even people you know well cannot be trusted in that state.
5. By dressing modestly.
6. By being visible when you are with someone, whether someone your age or an adult, other people should be able to easily see you.
7. By watching out for abusers. Under no circumstances should a person who has abused a child be working with young people. If you know of someone who has abused another, they should not be near you.

### **Communicating Your Concerns**

Communicating your concerns means telling someone in authority when you are uncomfortable with a situation or a person, and most especially, if you have been abused or you suspect that someone else may have been abused.

Pay attention to your own intuitions/feelings. Even if abuse is not occurring, it is still important to let others know when you have concerns. Only by communicating concerns can we use our knowledge to create a safe environment. Remember the following:

1. If you are worried that a friend is being/has been abused tell someone in authority. Be a true friend even at the risk of upsetting him or her by “overreacting.”
2. If you have sought help from someone in authority and that person does not take action, tell another person in authority.
3. If you have been abused, it is not your fault, even if you have not followed the steps listed above to avoiding potential danger. Do not fear being blamed. You will not be.
4. There is a network of help at home, among friends, at school, in the Church, and in various other organizations. There is always someone to turn to no matter who has victimized you or someone you know. Specifically:

- o Always talk to your parents about your concerns.
- o Notify a church official and/or a principal.
- o Call your county's Child Protective Services hotline, the County Prosecutor and/or the Diocese of Peoria.
- o Do not hesitate to call the police.

*This lesson plan has been adapted from the Diocese of La Crosse.*

# KNOW THE RULES...

## GENERAL TIPS FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS TO HELP KEEP THEIR CHILDREN SAFER

While many parents and guardians feel they are faced with new and unprecedented challenges when trying to keep their children safer in today's fast-paced and increasingly global society, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children offers these common-sense, general safety tips to help parents and guardians put these challenges into perspective.

1. Make sure you know where each of your children is at all times. Know your children's friends and be clear with your children about the places and homes they may visit. Make it a rule for your children to check in with you when they arrive at or depart from a particular location and when there is a change in plans. You should also let them know when you're running late or if your plans have changed so they can see the rule is for safety purposes and not being used to "check up" on them.
2. Never leave children unattended in an automobile, whether it is running or not. Children should never be left unsupervised or allowed to spend time alone or with others in automobiles, as the potential dangers to their safety outweigh any perceived convenience or "fun." Remind children to **never** hitchhike, approach a car or engage in a conversation with anyone within a car they do not know and trust, or go anywhere with anyone without getting your permission first.
3. Be involved in your children's activities. As an active participant, you'll have a better opportunity to observe how the adults in charge interact with your children. If you are concerned about anyone's behavior, take it up with the sponsoring organization.
4. Listen to your children. Pay attention if they tell you they don't want to be with someone or go somewhere. This may be an indication of more than a personality conflict or lack of interest in the activity or event.
5. Notice when anyone shows one or all of your children a great deal of attention or begins giving them gifts. Take the time to talk to your children about the person and find out why the person is acting in this way.
6. Teach your children they have the right to say **NO** to any unwelcome, uncomfortable, or confusing touch or actions by others and to get out of those situations as quickly as possible. If avoidance is not an option, children should be taught to kick, scream, and resist. When in such a situation, teach them to loudly yell that the person is not their father/mother/guardian and then immediately tell you if this happens. Reassure them you're there to help and it is okay to tell you anything.

7. Be sensitive to any changes in your children's behavior or attitude. Encourage open communication and learn how to be an active listener. Look and listen for small cues and clues that something may be troubling your children, because children are not always comfortable disclosing disturbing events or feelings. This may be because they are concerned about your reaction to their problems. If your children do confide problems to you, strive to remain calm, noncritical, and nonjudgmental. Listen compassionately to their concern, and work **with them** to get the help they need to resolve the problem.
8. Be sure to screen babysitters and caregivers. Many states now have a public registry that allows parents and guardians to check out individuals for prior criminal records and sex offenses. Check out references with other families who have used the caregiver or babysitter. Once you have chosen the caregiver, drop in unexpectedly to see how your children are doing. Ask your children how the experience with the caregiver was, and listen carefully to the responses.
9. Practice basic safety skills with your children. Make an outing to a mall or park a "teachable" experience in which your children can practice checking with you, using pay telephones, going to the restroom with a friend, and locating the adults who can help if they need assistance. Remember, allowing your children to wear clothing or carry items in public on which their name is displayed can bring about unwelcome attention from inappropriate people who may be looking for a way to start a conversation with your children.
10. Remember there is no substitute for your attention and supervision. Being available and taking time to really know and listen to your children helps build feelings of safety and security.

1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)

[www.missingchildren.com](http://www.missingchildren.com)

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# Q & A on CHILD SAFETY

What are the most important things parents and guardians should know when talking to their children about this issue?

- ✎ Don't forget your older children. Children 11-17 are equally at risk to victimization. At the same time you are giving your older children more freedom, make sure they understand the important safety rules as well.
- ✎ When you speak to your children, do so in a calm, nonthreatening manner. Children do not need to be frightened to get the point across. Fear can actually work at cross-purposes to the safety message, because fear can be paralyzing to a child.
- ✎ Speak openly about safety issues. Children will be less likely to come to you if the issue is enshrouded in secrecy. If they feel you are comfortable discussing the subject matter, they may be more forthcoming to you.
- ✎ Do not confuse children with the concept of "strangers." Children do not have the same understanding of who a stranger is as an adult might. The "stranger-danger" message is not effective, as danger to children is much greater from someone you or they know than from a "stranger."
- ✎ Practice what you talk about. You may think your children understands your message, but until they can incorporate it into their daily lives, it may not be clearly understood. Find opportunities to practice "what if" scenarios.
- ✎ Teach your children it is more important to get out of a threatening situation than it is to be polite. They also need to know it is okay to tell you what happened, and they won't be a tattletale.

What are the most important things parents and guardians should tell their children about this issue?

- ✎ Children should always **check first** with you or a trusted adult before they go anywhere, accept anything, or get into a car with anyone. This applies to older children as well.
- ✎ Children should not go out alone and should always **take a friend** with them when they go places or play outside.
- ✎ It's okay to say **no** if someone tries to touch them or treats them in a way that makes

them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused and to get out of the situation as quickly as possible.

- ✎ Children need to know they can **tell** you or a trusted adult if they feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.
- ✎ Children need to know there will always be someone to help them, and they have the right to be safe.

What is the biggest myth surrounding this issue?

The biggest myth is that the dangers to children come from strangers. In the majority of cases the perpetrator is someone the parents/guardians or child knows, and that person may be in a position of trust or responsibility to the family.

What advice would you offer parents and guardians who wanted to talk to their children about this issue?

Parents and guardians should choose opportunities or “teachable” moments to reinforce safety skills. If an incident occurs in your community, and your children ask you about it, speak frankly but with reassurance. Explain to your children that you want to discuss the safety rules with them, so they will know what to do if they are ever confronted with a difficult situation. Make sure you have “safety nets” in place, so your children know there is **always** someone who can help them.

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# CONOCE LAS REGLAS...

## CONSEJOS GENERALES PARA LOS PADRES, ABUELOS Y GUARDIANES PARA AYUDAR A SUS HIJOS A ESTAR MÁS SEGUROS

En una época en la que muchos padres, abuelos y guardianes sienten que enfrentan dificultades sin precedentes para tratar de mantener seguros a sus hijos en una sociedad vertiginosa y cada vez más globalizada, el Centro Nacional para Menores Desaparecidos y Explotados ofrece estos consejos generales de seguridad, fundados en el sentido común, para ayudar a los padres, abuelos y guardianes a poner estos desafíos en perspectiva.

1. Asegúrese de que sabe donde está cada uno de sus hijos en todo momento. Conozca a los amigos de sus hijos y hágales saber a sus hijos claramente cuáles son los lugares y hogares que pueden visitar. Haga obligatorio que sus hijos le avisen cuando llegan o salen de un lugar en particular y cuando hay un cambio de planes. Usted también debería avisarles cuando usted llegará con atraso o si cambian sus planes, para que ellos vean que la norma es con fines de seguridad y que no se la usa para “controlarlos.”
2. Nunca deje a los niños solos en un automóvil, ya sea que esté o no con el motor en marcha. A los niños nunca debería dejárselos sin supervisión ni permitirseles que queden solos o con otros en automóviles, dado que los peligros potenciales para su seguridad superan con creces cualquier conveniencia o “diversión.” Recuerde a sus hijos que **nunca** hagan dedo para subir a un vehículo, que no se aproximen a un auto o entren en conversación con alguien a quien no conocen o en quien no confían y que esté en un auto, ni que vayan a ninguna parte con ninguna persona sin pedirle permiso a usted primero.
3. Participe en las actividades de su hijo o hija. Como participante activo, usted tendrá mejor oportunidad de observar cómo los adultos interactúan con sus hijos. Si le preocupa el comportamiento de alguna persona, comuníquese a la organización patrocinante.
4. Oiga a sus hijos. Preste atención si le dicen que no quieren estar con alguien o no quieren ir a alguna parte. Esto podría ser una indicación de algo más que un conflicto de personalidades o de falta de interés en la actividad o evento.
5. Perciba cuando alguien preste mucha atención a uno o a todos sus hijos o comience a darles regalos. Tome el tiempo para hablar con sus hijos sobre esa persona y determinar por qué esa persona está actuando de esa manera.
6. Enseñe a sus hijos que tienen el derecho de decir **NO** a cualquier contacto físico o acción por otros que ellos no quieran o que los haga sentir incómodos o confusos. Enséñeles a avisarle a usted de inmediato si eso ocurre. Hágales sentir que usted está allí para ayudarlos y que está bien que le cuenten cualquier cosa.

7. Sea sensible a cualquier cambio en el comportamiento o actitud de sus hijos. Estimule la cooperación abierta y aprenda a ser un oyente activo. Mire y escuche las pequeñas pistas de que algo podría estar preocupando a sus hijos, porque los niños no siempre se sienten cómodos revelando eventos o sentimientos perturbadores. Esto podría ser porque les preocupa su reacción a sus problemas. Si sus hijos le confían sus problemas, esfuércese por mantenerse en calma, sin hacer críticas ni impartir juicios. Escuche compasivamente sus tribulaciones y trabaje **con ellos** para conseguir la ayuda que necesitan para resolver el problema.
8. Asegúrese de examinar a las niñeras y proveedores de cuidado. Muchos estados tienen ahora un registro público que permite a los padres, abuelos y guardianes verificar si una persona tiene prontuario penal o antecedentes de delitos sexuales. Compruebe las referencias con otras familias que han usado los servicios de esa persona. Después que haya seleccionado a la persona que proveerá el cuidado infantil, llegue sin anunciarse para ver cómo están sus hijos. Pregunte a sus hijos cómo fue la experiencia con esa persona, y oiga cuidadosamente las respuestas.
9. Practique medidas de seguridad básica con sus hijos. Torne una salida a un centro comercial o a un parque en una experiencia “educativa” en la que sus hijos puedan practicar pedirle permiso, usar teléfonos públicos, ir al baño con un amigo y localizar a adultos que puedan ayudarlos si necesitan asistencia. Recuerde que permitir a los niños usar prendas o llevar en público artículos con su nombre a la vista puede llamar la atención no deseada de personas que podrían estar buscando una manera de iniciar conversación con sus hijos.
10. Recuerde que su atención y supervisión no tienen sustitutos. Estar disponible y tomar el tiempo para realmente conocer y oír a sus hijos les ayudará a ellos a desarrollar sentimientos de seguridad y estabilidad.

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# Preguntas y Respuestas sobre seguridad infantil

## ¿Qué es lo más importante que los padres, abuelos y guardianes deben saber cuando hablan con sus hijos acerca de este tema?

- ✎ No se olvide de sus hijos de más edad. Los niños y jóvenes de 11 a 17 años también corren riesgo de ser víctimas de actos delictivos. Al mismo tiempo que les da más libertad, asegúrese de que ellos también entienden las importantes reglas de seguridad.
- ✎ Cuando hable con sus hijos, hágalo de una manera tranquila, que no cause miedo. No es necesario que los niños se asusten para que comprendan los peligros. En realidad, el temor puede ser contraproducente, ya que el miedo puede paralizar a un niño.
- ✎ Hable abiertamente de las cuestiones de seguridad. Es menos probable que los niños acudan a usted si el tema está envuelto en un manto de secreto. Si piensan que usted se siente cómodo cuando habla del asunto, serán más comunicativos.
- ✎ No confunda a los niños con el concepto de “extraños.” Los niños no tienen la misma idea que los adultos acerca de quién es un extraño. El mensaje “peligro-extraño” no es eficaz, ya que es más probable que el peligro para los niños venga de alguien que usted o ellos conocen, en vez de un extraño.
- ✎ Practique lo que enseña. Usted puede creer que los niños entienden su mensaje, pero hasta que ellos lo incorporen en sus vidas cotidianas es posible que no haya sido claramente entendido. Busque oportunidades para practicar escenarios de “qué pasa si...”
- ✎ Enseñe a los niños que es más importante huir de una situación amenazadora que ser corteses. Ellos también necesitan saber que está bien que le cuenten a usted lo sucedido y que no serán vistos como “cuenteros” por ello.

## ¿Qué es lo más importante que los padres, abuelos y guardianes deben comunicar a sus hijos acerca de este tema?

- ✎ Los niños siempre **deben avisarle** a usted o a un adulto de confianza antes de ir a cualquier lado, aceptar cualquier regalo o subir a un automóvil con cualquier persona. Esto se aplica también a los niños de más edad.
- ✎ Los niños no deben salir solos y siempre **deben hacerse acompañar** por un amigo cuando van a algún lado o juegan afuera de su casa.
- ✎ Está bien decir que **no** si alguien trata de tocarlos o los trata de una manera que los hace sentir asustados, incómodos o confundidos y escapar de la situación tan rápido como sea posible.
- ✎ Los niños necesitan saber que le pueden **contar** a usted o a un adulto de confianza si se

sienten asustados, incómodos o confundidos.

- ☞ Los niños necesitan saber que siempre habrá alguien para ayudarlos y que tienen derecho a sentirse seguros.

### **¿Cuál es el mito más grande respecto a este tema?**

El mito más grande es que los extraños constituyen el mayor peligro para los niños. En la mayoría de los casos, el autor del delito es alguien a quien los padres o el niño conocen y esa persona puede ser alguien de confianza o estar en una posición de responsabilidad respecto al niño y su familia.

### **¿Qué consejo le ofrecería usted a los padres, abuelos y guardianes que quieren hablar con sus hijos acerca de este tema?**

Los padres, abuelos y guardianes deben elegir oportunidades o momentos propicios para la enseñanza para reforzar las reglas de seguridad. Si ocurre un incidente en su comunidad y su hijo le pregunta acerca de él, hable francamente pero con palabras tranquilizadoras. Explique a sus hijos que usted quiere discutir con ellos las reglas de seguridad para que sepan qué es lo que tienen que hacer si alguna vez enfrentan una situación difícil. Asegúrese de que usted tiene “redes de seguridad” establecidas, para que los niños sepan que **siempre** habrá alguien que los podrá ayudar.

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