

SAFE ENVIRONMENT CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

Eighth Grade

Overview

This lesson builds upon prior years' teachings, helping eighth grade students strengthen their understanding of human dignity, moral decision-making, and virtuous living. The lesson emphasizes respect for self and others, the importance of forming a well-guided conscience, and the role of virtue in living a safe, Christ-centered life.

Students will review and deepen their knowledge of the **NO, GO, TELL** action plan, focusing on assertive behavior when confronted with unsafe or inappropriate situations. They will discuss the reality of harassment and abuse, the responsibility to set and respect personal boundaries—both in dating and online—and the need to make good choices that protect themselves and others.

Special attention is given to the virtues of **temperance** and **chastity**, helping students recognize the value of self-control, authentic love, and preparing for future healthy relationships. Through prayer, reflection, and practical strategies, students will be encouraged to grow in moral strength, respect for others, and confidence in living out their Catholic faith in daily life.

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, eighth grade students will be able to:

1. Recite the **NO, GO, TELL** action plan, with a focus on using assertive behavior. *(Review of Seventh Grade)*
2. Define the term “**conscience**” in their own words and explain how a moral conscience is formed. *(Review of Seventh Grade)*
3. Compare and contrast **appropriate and inappropriate behaviors** for themselves, their peers, and adults. *(Review of Seventh Grade)*
4. Identify **dangerous behaviors** in relationships, including harassment and other forms of abuse.
5. Name at least two ways they can live out the virtues of **temperance** and **chastity** in their daily lives. *(Review of Seventh Grade)*
6. List three appropriate **boundaries in dating** that protect their dignity and help them live chastely.

Part One: Respect for Ourselves and Others

God created each of us out of love and in His image. This means every person has **immense dignity and value**—not because of what we do, but because we are His children. God always loves us, even when we disobey Him.

He calls us to love ourselves and our neighbors. One way we do this is through the virtue of **respect**:

Respect is speaking and acting with courtesy, treating others with dignity as children of God.

We show respect in many ways:

- **Through our words:** Avoid foul language, gossip, and talking behind someone's back.
- **Through our bodies:** Dress modestly, take care of your health, avoid drugs, and remain chaste—keeping sexual activity for marriage.
- **Through our actions:** Do not hurt yourself or others, fight, cheat, or steal.

When someone disrespects us, it hurts—because they fail to recognize our worth as children of God. That's why we are called to treasure not only our own lives but the lives of others.

Scripture reminds us:

"We know what real love is because Christ gave up His life for us. And we also ought to give up our lives for our Christian brothers and sisters... Dear children, let us not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions." (1 John 3:16–18)

And Jesus teaches in Matthew 25:

"Whatever you do for the least of these, you do for Me."

Respect isn't always easy, especially when others treat us poorly. But even then, we are called to live as gifts to one another—putting others' needs before our own, as Christ did for us.

Part Two: Uncomfortable Situations

Sometimes people do not respect our bodies. They may try to trick us or hurt us by giving us **bad touches**.

Even if a bad touch doesn't physically hurt, it can make us feel scared or nervous. That uncomfortable feeling is our body's warning sign: "**Something bad is happening. Get away.**"

God gave us these feelings to protect us. We must listen to them.

If someone touches your private areas when they shouldn't:

- It is **never your fault**.
- You will **not get in trouble** for telling the truth.
- Even if they told you to keep it a secret, you must speak up.

Tell a **trusted adult**, such as:

- A parent or relative
- A teacher, principal, or coach
- A guidance counselor
- A doctor, police officer, or firefighter

God placed these people in your life to help protect you. If one doesn't listen, **keep telling until someone does**.

Always remember:

- Feeling uncomfortable is God’s way of warning you.
- Get out of the unsafe situation.
- Tell a trusted adult right away.

Your safety matters—and God wants you to be safe.

Part Three: NO, GO, TELL Safety Rules

When someone’s actions make you feel uncomfortable, follow the **NO, GO, TELL** plan. These three steps can help keep you safe.

1. NO

Say firmly and loudly: *“NO, I don’t like that!”*

Use assertive body language—step back, hold up your hands, or cross your arms.

Saying “NO” shows respect for yourself and sets a clear boundary.

Remember: if a friend says “NO” to you, respect their boundary too—even if you didn’t mean to upset them.

2. GO

After saying “NO,” get away quickly.

Move to a safe place where you can find help.

3. TELL

Tell a trusted adult what happened. This is not tattling—it is protecting yourself.

If someone touches your private areas, it is never your fault—even if they try to blame you or told you to keep it secret.

God gave you trusted adults to keep you safe. If the first person doesn’t believe you, **keep telling until someone does.**

Part Four: Harassment and Abuse

Being **assertive**—confident and respectful—affirms our dignity and worth. This is very different from being **aggressive**, which is hurtful and meant to diminish others.

Sometimes aggression crosses into **harassment**.

Harassment includes verbal, physical, or written actions that offend, intimidate, or hurt others. They can create a hostile environment in school for the person being targeted.

Examples include:

- Racial slurs
- Unwanted sexual touching
- Sexual jokes or comments
- Showing offensive images
- Physical or emotional mistreatment
- Personal attacks or insults

Harassment can be intentional or unintentional—but it is always damaging. If you believe you are being harassed, **tell a trusted adult right away and get help.**

One serious form of harassment is **abuse**. Abuse comes in three main types:

- **Physical Abuse:** Hitting, pushing, or physically harming someone
- **Emotional Abuse:** Name-calling, threats, manipulation, isolation
- **Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual contact, language, or behavior that is unwanted or inappropriate

Abuse and harassment are **never okay**. They violate human dignity and carry serious consequences:

- **Legal consequences:** fines, court action, or jail
- **Moral consequences:** sins against God's law, which call for repentance and reconciliation

In our community, certain adults are required by law to report suspected abuse of minors. These include:

- Teachers and school staff
- Doctors, nurses, and medical professionals
- Counselors
- Police and law enforcement
- Clergy and childcare workers

Victims of abuse often feel trapped, isolated, or even blamed by their abuser. But the truth is:

- **Abuse is never the victim's fault**
- Every person deserves love, respect, and protection

As Christians, we are called to put ourselves in the victim's shoes, to feel their pain, and to act. Reporting abuse is not only the law—it is an act of love and justice.

Abusers break both the laws of the state and the moral law of God. They are responsible for seeking forgiveness from God, from their victims, and from the community they have harmed.

Bottom line: Harassment and abuse are sins and crimes. We must recognize the warning signs, take them seriously, and seek help immediately—for ourselves or others.

Part Five: Moral Conscience Formation

Every day, we make choices:

- To be assertive or aggressive
- To be patient or quick to anger
- To love others or to use them
- To follow God's law or to reject it

These choices are guided by our **conscience**.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines conscience as:

“The inner voice of a human being, within whose heart the inner law of God is inscribed.”

It’s that voice inside us urging us to do good and avoid evil.

We’ve all experienced moments when something just felt wrong. That’s our conscience speaking.

Forming our conscience is essential to making good decisions.

Our conscience is shaped by:

- **Scripture:** listening to God’s Word
- **Prayer:** daily communication with God
- **The Sacraments:** especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist
- **Guidance from spiritual leaders:** parents, teachers, priests

We need **God’s grace** to live out His teachings—we cannot do it alone.

That’s why the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** is so important. Through it, Christ forgives our sins, wipes our slate clean, and fills us with grace so we can begin again.

With a well-formed conscience and God’s grace, we are strengthened to make choices that honor Him, protect our dignity, and show love to others.

Part Six: Virtuous Living

A **well-formed conscience** allows us to live lives of virtue. The more we practice virtue, the easier it becomes to choose what is right.

- Daily prayer and the Sacraments help us grow stronger in virtue.
- Scripture and the virtues are our **road map for life**.

Virtues are good habits that make it easier and more joyful to do the right thing. Just as practice improves a skill like basketball or music, living virtue daily strengthens our moral lives.

Two key virtues for 8th graders are **temperance** and **chastity**.

Temperance

- **Temperance** is self-control, moderation, and mastery of our desires.
- Our desires—food, possessions, relationships, sexuality—are good because God created them, but they must not control us.

Examples:

- Saying, “*I’ve had enough*” instead of overeating.
- Choosing not to indulge in unhealthy or selfish desires.

How to grow in temperance:

- Pray for God’s grace daily.
- Practice moderation in small daily choices.
- Remember: small steps in temperance in one area help in others.

Temperance allows us to love and respect others instead of being ruled by our own wants.

Chastity

- **Chastity** is sexual self-control: saving all sexual intimacy for marriage.
- It moderates sexual desires, thoughts, and actions, so we see others as people to love, not objects to use.

When we give in to uncontrolled sexual desires, we risk:

- Using others
- Turning to pornography
- Neglecting other parts of life

Chastity says YES:

- **To yourself:** “I have dignity and worth. I am worth waiting for.”
- **To your future spouse:** “They are worth waiting for.”
- **To a hopeful future:** Free from disease, unintended pregnancy, regret, and heartbreak.
- **To God:** Trusting His plan of joy and love for your life.

Chastity is not just a list of “No’s.” It is a lifestyle of true freedom, joy, and love.

How to strengthen chastity:

- Pray daily for purity.
- Live closely with Christ through Scripture and the Sacraments.
- Set clear boundaries in relationships and choices.

The closer we live to Christ’s way, the more natural virtue becomes—and the freer and happier we are.

Part Seven: Boundaries in Dating

Studies say that many kids start dating as young as 13 years old. Others wait until later, typically around 16. Regardless of when we start dating, we are still called to live out the virtue of **chastity**. So it is important to **set and respect boundaries**. Boundaries help us avoid situations where temptation is strong and protect our dignity as children of God.

Key Boundaries for Chaste Dating Relationships:

- **Recognize your sexuality as a gift from God.** It is meant for marriage—not for “fooling around” or “hooking up.”
- **Actions matter.** If someone pressures you into something that makes you uncomfortable, that is not love.
- **Protect your soul.** Even if something “feels good” physically, if it is not right or appropriate, it harms your soul and dignity.
- **Don’t believe the lie that “everyone is doing it.”** Many are waiting. Surround yourself with friends and relationships that respect your decision to wait.

- **Know your worth.** You are too valuable to compromise your boundaries just to be in a relationship.

Remember: setting boundaries honors God, protects your dignity, and prepares you for a future of authentic love.

The closer we live to Christ’s way, the more natural virtue becomes—and the freer and happier we are.

Part Eight: Using Good Judgment / Internet Safety

Just as we set boundaries in dating, we must also set **boundaries online**. God gave us the ability to think before we act—using good judgment keeps us healthy and safe.

Be cautious of strangers:

- Dangerous people may look friendly, smile, or seem nice to trick you.
- If someone makes you feel uncomfortable—even if you’ve seen them before—trust your instincts and get away.
- Strangers may try to offer gifts, rides, or secrets. Don’t accept them.
- Always get permission from a parent or teacher before going anywhere.
- Identify safe, trusted adults in advance (like a coach, police officer, or parent).

Online safety rules:

- Never talk to people you don’t know on social media, in chat rooms, or through games, emails, or texts.
- Don’t meet online “friends” in person.
- Never share personal information: your name, address, phone number, pictures, school, or location.
- Remember: anything you post or send—texts, pictures, emails—can be stored and shared permanently.
- Before posting, ask: *“Would I want my parents, future spouse, or future employer to see this?”*

If something online makes you uncomfortable:

- Tell a trusted adult right away.
- Keep parents or guardians informed about what you see, who you talk to, and any messages you receive.

God placed trusted adults in your life because He wants you safe. Always reach out for help if you ever feel unsafe.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the Truth, and You call us to follow You.
 You have given us a conscience to guide us in choosing what is good and right.
 Help us to pray and stay close to You as we make decisions each day.

You desire that we be safe, at peace, and filled with joy.

Thank You for giving us the gifts and tools to make good choices and avoid danger.

When we stray from Your path, help us to return with open hearts, trusting in Your love, mercy, and forgiveness.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

NO

GO

TELL

Examples of Abuse

Physical Abuse: An action that causes a physical injury that was not an accident. This includes beatings, burning someone, breaking bones, causing internal injuries, starving or denying water, as well as exposure to extreme heat or cold. Signs of abuse may include serious or unexplained bruises, welts, scars, and burn marks.

Emotional Abuse: Action or words that seek to harm or destroy the emotional development and well-being of another, especially his/her sense of confidence, personal worth and dignity. Behaviors include:

- Constant criticism
- Rejection and isolation
- Withholding physical affection, support, and guidance

Sexual abuse: Exploiting children through sexual situations that are developmentally inappropriate or dangerous/hurtful. This includes:

- Non-touching sexual abuse
 - Indecent exposure
 - Exposing children to pornographic material
- Touching sexual abuse
 - Fondling
 - Rape/sexual intercourse
 - Making a child touch an adult's sexual organs
- Sexual exploitation - using children to film, photograph, or model pornography

Harassment Scenarios

(From the Diocese of Madison Safe Environment 8th Grade lesson plan)

Story #1:

Tess and Brian have been friends and neighbors since they were in second grade. Brian loves giving Tess a hard time at school. He thinks it is funny that she and the rest of girls get embarrassed when he or the other boys brush up against them from behind or by making comments about how short their skirts are. Tess is not used to Brian touching her or looking at her like that, but she rather likes it. This week she has been writing him notes in class asking Brian if he has ever kissed or gone further with any of the other girls in their grade, and whether he wishes he could do those things with her. Brian's mother found one of Tess' notes in Brian's pocket when she was doing the laundry yesterday, but she gave it back to Brian- assuming that the kids were just joking.

Story #2:

Chase really likes movies and TV and he wants to be an actor someday. At school and church, he is always in the plays and musicals. Most of his friends are girls so some of the other boys in religious education and at youth group call him vulgar names or shove and trip him if he gets too close to them. Chase's friends, Elizabeth and Stacy, sometimes tell the other boys to stop, but they also laugh because sometimes what they say about Chase is funny. The youth minister, David, usually ignores what happens to Chase, thinking the boys are just acting tough and that if Chase acted less feminine when he was interacting with the other kids, it would be a lot easier for him.

Name _____

Boundaries in Dating

When striving to live a life of chastity, it is best to be prepared with your personal boundaries before they are questioned or tested. Use the space below to list and explain/defend three boundaries in dating.

Boundary #1: _____

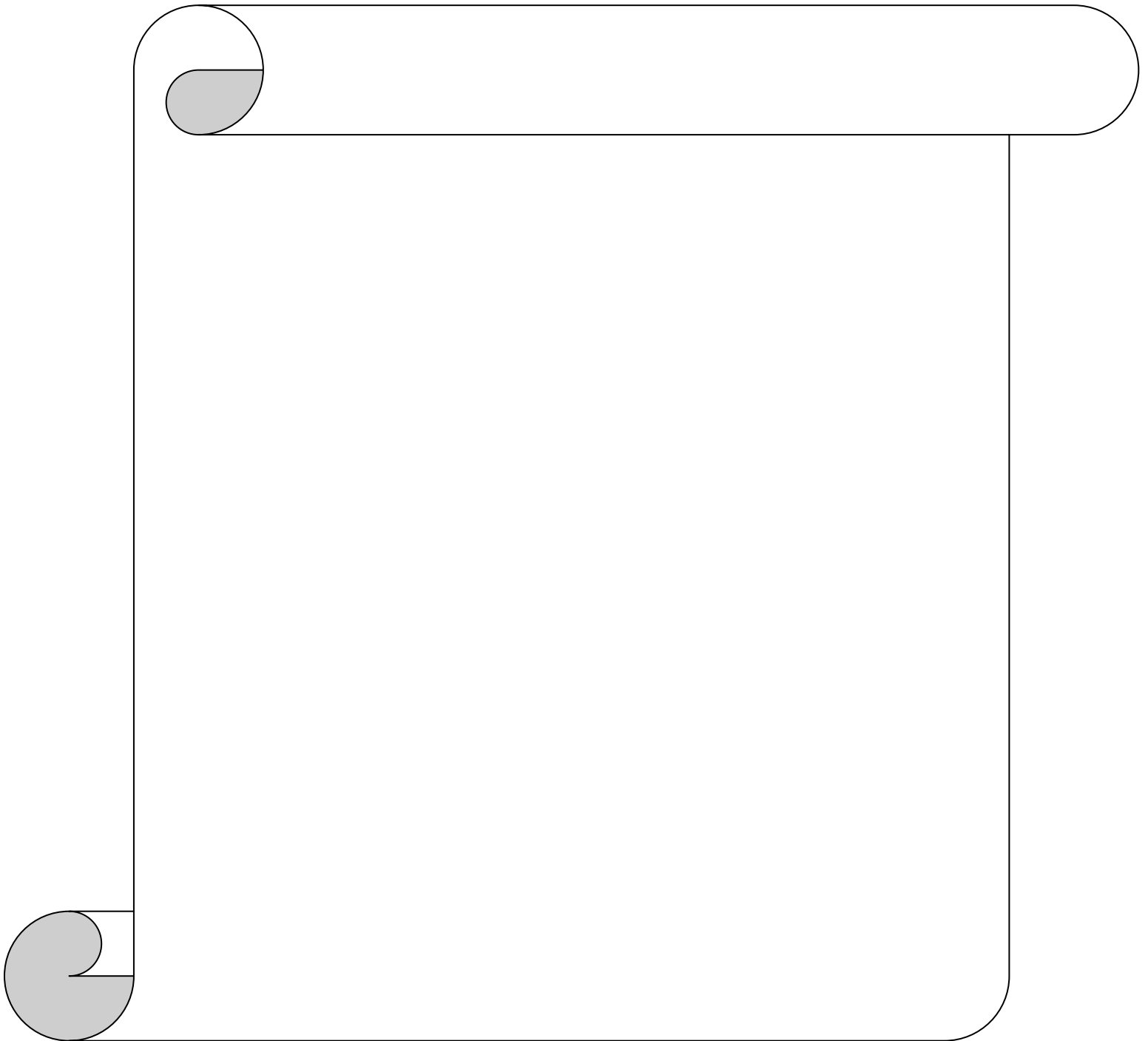
Boundary #2: _____

Boundary #3: _____

Name _____

Five Commandments of Internet Safety

Make a list of the rules to follow for being safe on the internet (including websites, Facebook, Instagram, chat rooms, etc.)



Ways to Live a Pure Life

1. Build and strengthen your personal character

- Train like an athlete – take little steps in the right direction everyday.

2. Purify your mind

- Stay away from junk food of the mind (inappropriate images, song lyrics, websites, etc.)
- Overexposure to bad behavior makes us numb to it.

3. Purify your body

- Modesty in how you dress - “Cover your B’s”:
 - For girls this means cover your breasts, belly, back, butt, and bra or other undergarments.
 - For guys this means belly, back, butt, boxers/briefs.

4. Stay where the odds are in your favor

- Avoid situations where you are likely to fail – stay away from temptation
- The easiest temptation to avoid is the one that doesn’t exist.
- Don’t test yourself or someone you love to see how far you or they can go before they fail or sin or give into temptation.

5. Pray and receive the sacraments, especially the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist

- Pray for strength in your life of purity. Pray for your future spouse and vocation. Also pray for all the people who don’t know about chastity –that they may know the joy that comes from living a chaste life.
- Remember that you cannot live out a life of chastity alone...it’s impossible! You NEED God.

6. Have a reminder

- Keep a holy card in your wallet with a saint known for chastity.
- Put a crucifix over your bed.

7. NEVER GIVE UP & KNOW YOU ARE NOT ALONE

- Remember: “Christ is calling you; the Church needs you; the Pope believes in you, and he expects great things from you!” (John Paul II, 1999.)