

**Lesson 4 for Grades 6—8**

**Secrets, Surprises and Promises**

**PRINCIPLE**

Children must learn how to respect their own health and safety, and that of others, by understanding the safety rules about secrets. They have a right to be safe, and they are allowed to create boundaries to protect themselves in situations that cause discomfort or violate the safety rules.

**CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE**

*"Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD."*  
—Jeremiah 1:8, New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV)

**OBJECTIVES**

Through this lesson, the adult lesson leader reinforces the parent's message about boundaries. After Lesson 4, children should be better able to:

- Identify the boundary differences between secrets, surprises and promises
- Understand the safety rules with regard to secrets and promises:
  - Say "No!" when someone tries to make you keep a secret regarding safety
  - Try to leave the situation if you feel uncomfortable
  - Tell a safe adult as soon as possible (even if it didn't happen to you)
- Technology component: Understand similar boundary rules apply for online activities, too
- Begin to understand that if anybody does make them keep a secret, gives them an unsafe touch or shows them inappropriate material, it isn't the child's fault

**Background for Lesson Leaders:**

Before beginning this session, the Lesson Leader should read the Teaching Boundary and Safety Guide, as it gives a wealth of information regarding boundaries and how to address them.

Remember that children of this age are dealing with enormous peer pressure while trying to understand their independent role in the world apart from their families. It is not always "cool" to say that you must tell someone if you are touched or approached (in person, or online) in an inappropriate or sexual way. Situations of this nature may involve immense shame, guilt, threats, etc., for the youth. So, do your best to stress the importance of good communication while speaking to the adolescent in a way that has him / her actually hear you, rather than ignore you. It will be important for the adult to stress "healthy" behavior and boundaries, and the "right thing to do" when discussing boundaries to this age group.

These exercises are intended to empower young people to begin to think about safety issues and to be their parents' partners in making sure the child has the tools needed to resist the overtures of a potential child molester or an adult with poor intentions.

**This age group: Dealing with pre-adolescents and adolescents—key concept is "transition"**

The middle school child is experiencing a period of rapid growth. The emergence of interest in the opposite sex is occurring. He / she is often concerned about physical change, body size, skin quality and hair length. Body image is very important to this age as he / she complains of being either too physically mature or immature—and may also complain that they do not have enough privacy. The peer group plays an import role in shaping attitudes and interest. Caregivers need to regularly assure youngsters that changes are normal, though the rate of change varies from person to person.

Lesson leaders must carefully listen to children and observe *what is happening in their lives*. Let young people be themselves. Let them explore their self-expression; but, know *who* they are with and *what* they are doing, and remind them of the importance of protecting themselves during this dynamic time in their lives. During this time, children are completely self-absorbed, and many are naturally less communicative than at other periods during their development. This is the point that more trust will be given to the youth to evaluate safe and unsafe situations when they are not in the care of their parents.

**ACTIVITY OPTION #1: Play the (optional) introductory video as an icebreaker**

The introductory video for children and youth in this age range is designed to open a simple discussion about personal boundary safety. The video is brief and is not intended to be a substitute for the lesson itself. It's merely an introduction designed to "break the ice" and assist the transition of completing the interactive Lesson Activity options. If the video is shown as an optional activity, please use in conjunction with one of the additional activity options, because discussion and practice are the critical components needed to teach children and youth how to protect themselves. They learn best by "doing"; not just listening.

**ACTIVITY OPTION #2: Review and discuss key vocabulary words**

- **Private body parts**—those body parts covered by a bathing suit.
- **Rules**—a prescribed guide for conduct or action. We follow the rules to make sure we are safe—just like how we have a seatbelt rule to keep us safe in the car, or the safety rules before we cross the street. [For example, teach the child a simple rule for what to do if someone tries to touch him / her in an unsafe way, which is to say "No!", try to get away, and tell an adult as soon as possible.]
- **Boundaries**—the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. There are boundaries you can see (like a fence around a yard) and boundaries you can't see with your eyes (like the comfort zone around us that we call our "personal space"). Boundaries vary depending on the relationship with the other person. For example, a boundary between a child and a grandparent is different than the boundary between a child and a teacher or coach.
- **Saying "No"**—to say "no" means to refuse, deny, reject or express disapproval of. This word is used to express a boundary and communicate that you do not want something to happen or continue. [Let children know it's OK to say "No" to an adult if they make you feel scared or uncomfortable, or if they touch your private body parts.]
- **Safe friends and safe adults**—safe people won't hurt you without a good reason and won't intentionally confuse you. They listen to and consistently respect boundaries, and follow the rules. [Explain that a child may have many safe friends and adults. Give children examples of adult behavior that could hurt them, but may be necessary for the child's safety, i.e. medical exams, vaccinations, throat swabs, removing splinters, stopping a child from running into the road, etc.]
- **Unsafe friends and unsafe adults**—unsafe friends and unsafe adults put a child at risk for emotional, spiritual and physical harm. These are people who place a child in danger for their own purposes without concern for the welfare of the child. They also do not consistently listen to the parents' wishes or the child's boundaries. [Tell children we can know when someone is unsafe if they do not follow the rules or listen to our boundaries.]
- **Secret**—something kept hidden, never told or unexplained. Secrets exclude others and have potential to harm, sometimes causing the person involved to feel frightened or uncomfortable, fearful or sad. Secrets also send the message to children that they, or someone else, will get into trouble if the secret is shared [For example, let children know that there are no secrets when it comes to personal and physical safety. Tell children it's wrong for an adult or another child to ask to keep a secret about safety—especially unsafe touches—because that's a way for people to get hurt. If an individual tries to make a child keep a secret or makes him / her feel frightened, the child must know to communicate this information right away to a parent or caring adult—and be reassured that the child will be protected regardless of threats or seeming consequences of "telling".]
- **Surprise**—Surprises are typically happy. They cause feelings of happiness and joy. They are exciting, and temporary—meaning they will be revealed within a specific timeframe. As surprises are usually fun, they include activities like birthday surprises, gifts, trips and special treats. Surprises are inclusive and meant to be shared with others.
- **Problem**—Problems can be big and small; they can be small, little things like puzzles or big things like emergencies—and often need to be solved. They can involve fears and emotions. Sometimes we put boundaries in place to prevent problems, or to be more prepared for them. Whenever we have a problem that we don't know how to solve, we should talk to a safe adult for help. If we have problems about safety issues, boundaries and secrets, we definitely need to talk to a safe adult. [For example, a house fire is a big problem for everyone who lives there, and for the people who live near that house. It's a problem because it's unsafe, and it could hurt people. When a house is on fire, help is needed right away. How do we get help with the problem of house fires? As soon as it's safe, we "stop, drop and roll", try to get out and call 911, and the fire department comes to help us fix the problem of the fire that's too big to fix on our own.]
- **Threat**—When someone threatens you, they are stating that they are going to hurt, injure, damage or do something dangerous if you don't do what they want you to do. You never have to listen to threats, but you should be prepared in case you experience them. [For example, someone might threaten you and say if you tell about an unsafe secret, they're going to hurt your someone/something you know, and that you're going to get into trouble. When you hear someone threaten you about an unsafe secret, that is when we definitely need to tell a safe adult.]
- **Promise**—When you make a promise, you are declaring that something specific will happen—that you will either "do" or "not do" something. Promises can be good! But, we should never make promises about keeping quiet regarding unsafe secrets.

- **Privacy**—Privacy is primarily about being respectful of a person’s personal boundaries or information. The things we appropriately can keep private include beliefs, opinions, ideas, traits, etc. Maintaining and honoring someone’s privacy does not result in hurting them or others, or compromising someone’s safety. And, complete privacy is not always applicable when it deals with our safety boundaries. When it comes to a situation where boundaries have been violated, someone is hurt or has the potential to be hurt, we should keep the information private insofar as we only tell the people who need to know to help us (and them) stay safe—such as our safe adults or other people who can help us. We also keep other things private, such as our private parts, which we keep private underneath our clothing when we’re in public. Privacy and secrecy are often confused—and the main difference is that unsafe secrecy involves situations where we deliberately keep something from someone else usually out of fear, where keeping the secret can negatively impact or harm ourselves or someone else.

### ACTIVITY OPTION #3: What, Why, Next—Safe Surprises, Unsafe Secrets & Privacy

**Background:** This activity involves providing boundary information, helping youth to brainstorm, and then giving them specific scenarios to work out how they would respond to the situation if they are confronted with it.

**Note:** The worksheet template for this activity is included in the downloaded set of materials at the end of this packet.

Youth need to understand that there are significant differences between surprises and secrets, in addition to how privacy is incorporated into the conversation for both topics. The older we are, the more we consider elements of privacy in communication with others. However, they must know that if someone is trying to make them keep an unsafe secret, then they must tell a safe adult—which will involve having courage. When a youth knows the difference between unsafe secrets and safe surprises and that keeping a secret isn’t OK, he/she’s more likely to reveal boundary violations and/or abuse.

#### SUPPLIES

Dry erase board or Chalk board  
Dry erase marker or Chalk  
Eraser capabilities  
Writing utensils  
Pre-printed worksheets

**Preparation:** This activity has two parts. The first part involves a discussion with the entire group. For the second part, the Lesson Leader will need to determine ahead of time whether it will be an individual activity or a small-group activity. Regardless of whether it will be individually completed or done in a small-group style, the entire class will come back together to present the examples and discuss the answers. The following instructions differ depending on whether the Lesson Leader chooses to have the youth individually complete the activity or work in small groups.

**To utilize small groups:** The Lesson Leader will assign small groups of 2-3 youth to specific worksheet examples (the Lesson Leader may decide to specify the people in the groups or may allow youth to decide). The Lesson Leader should provide one worksheet per youth to be able to record answers, and to take home after the exercise. Small groups will have a select number of scenarios to complete, and larger class sizes will mean that each small group will have fewer scenarios to address. After the scenarios have been completed by the youth in their small groups, together, they will present their findings to the entire class for a larger group discussion. During the larger class discussion, the Lesson Leader will ensure that the youth are on the right track for each scenario and will fill in any gaps per the Answer Key below.

**To utilize individual completion:** The Lesson Leader will simply ensure that each youth has their own copy of the worksheet. After children have an opportunity to complete the exercise, the Lesson Leader will lead another discussion with everyone using the Answer Key below.

**Discussion:** **Part 1:** First, briefly outline the following discussion items with the youth, checking in periodically to measure their comprehension.

#### Talk to youth about secrets:

- A secret is something that is intended to never be told. They’re unsafe, especially when they have to do with our boundary safety rules involving our bodies. Boundary safety involves rules like when we tell a safe adult when we’re uncomfortable or scared, and how we tell a safe adult right away if someone tries to touch or see our private parts—or shows us images of private parts. Knowing about secrets are an important part of our boundary safety plan, because they impact our safety.
- When it comes to your safety and the boundary rules, it’s not OK to keep secrets. You have a right to be safe, and for people to honor and respect your boundaries.
- When someone asks you to keep a secret, it can make you feel sad and scared, or uncomfortable. Sometimes they might even make you feel special, because you might like the person who is asking you to keep a secret.
- Holding onto a secret might also cause us to feel guilty or ashamed. It can take great courage to do the right thing and reveal an unsafe secret either about ourselves or someone we know—but this is the right thing to do.



- It's wrong for an adult or another child to ask you to keep a secret about your safety—especially unsafe touches—because that's a way for people to get hurt. Keeping silent about an unsafe secret only protects the person who is causing the harm, which allows them to keep on doing what they want to that person, and maybe others.
- If someone asks you to keep a secret about something unsafe, you have to tell a safe adult, even if the person told you not to. Sometimes the adult or other person might say that something is “confidential,” which means the same thing as secret.
- Sometimes our friends might confide in us about something unsafe that happened to them. Sometimes when people confide in us, they are asking for help, even if they tell us not to tell anyone else.
- Sometimes people will try to scare you into making a promise about keeping secrets. The person might say that you'll get into trouble if you tell, or they might threaten you and say that they'll hurt your animal, or a friend or family member. They might threaten your reputation, or hold something they know over you as blackmail. If this happens, it's really important that you talk to a safe adult.
- Sometimes this is scary, especially if we feel we've done something wrong, but telling a safe adult is the right thing to do.
- It's OK to talk about the unsafe secret with one of your safe adults, even if you promised not to tell. You can always talk to your safe adults!
- Sometimes, though, our safe adults might not act the way we expect them to, and if that happens it's even more important to get the information to a different safe adult—and keep going until you get help.
- If you've already kept a secret with someone that you now realize is unsafe, it is important to go to your safe adult (or a different one) and talk to them about it.

**Note:** In this activity, it's important for the Lesson Leader to acknowledge that there are adults and children who do have good intentions, who attempt to make children keep secrets without realizing that they might be dangerous. All types of secrets are dangerous because they might condition children to keep secrets from unsafe people. With this in mind, be sure not to vilify anyone who does ask to keep a secret, and instead stress the importance of always taking that information to a safe adult. Remember that there will be children who have already promised others to keep secrets, and they should not be made to feel guilty or ashamed about this.

#### Talk to youth about their safe adults:

- Let's talk about the safe adults in your life. What are safe adults?
  - Safe people won't hurt you without a good reason and won't intentionally confuse you. They listen to and consistently respect boundaries, and follow the rules. [Explain that a child may have many safe friends and adults. Give children examples of adult behavior that could hurt them, but may be necessary for the child's safety, i.e. medical exams, vaccinations, throat swabs, removing splinters, stopping a child from running into the road, etc.]
- Who are some of your safe adults?
  - (Examples include: teachers, someone at church, principal, aunt, uncle, mom or dad, police officer, firefighter, etc.)

#### Approach the topic of privacy with youth. Ask: how does privacy affect secrets?

**Explain:** Privacy is primarily about being respectful of a person's personal boundaries or information. The things we appropriately can keep private include beliefs, opinions, ideas, traits, etc. Maintaining and honoring someone's privacy does not result in hurting them or others, or compromising someone's safety. And, complete privacy is not always applicable when it deals with our safety boundaries. When it comes to a situation where boundaries have been violated, someone is hurt or has the potential to be hurt, we should keep the information private insofar as we only tell the people who need to know to help us (and them) stay safe—such as our safe adults or other people who can help us.

We also keep other things private, such as our private parts, which we keep private underneath our clothing when we're in public. Privacy and secrecy are often confused—and the main difference is that unsafe secrecy involves situations where we deliberately keep something from someone else usually out of fear, where keeping the secret can negatively impact or harm ourselves or someone else.

**Ask children to brainstorm about what the differences and similarities are between Unsafe Secrets and Safe Surprises, to then be discussed with everyone.**

Depending on class size, the Lesson Leader could simply discuss what's in the Chart, or record the Chart onto the board. To do so, create an empty table with filled-in header titles that looks similar to the table below. The Lesson Leader will then invite youth to give examples. If they give one example for one column, always ask them what the difference or similarity would be for the other column.

A helpful chart is listed below which shows the opposites between the unsafe secret and the safe surprise, that are separated into similarities and differences per the column on the left. If youth do not come up with examples on their own, feel free to help guide them. The Lesson Leader need not follow the exact order listed on the graph; instead, follow what the children denote.

	UNSAFE SECRETS:	SAFE SURPRISES:
<b>DIFFERENCES</b>	May cause feelings of sadness	Often cause feelings of happiness, excitement
	May cause feelings of shame or guilt	Often cause feelings of confidence
	May cause feelings of anger or betrayal	Shouldn't cause feelings of anger or betrayal
	Might involve threats regarding the safety of loved ones, including animals, or someone's reputation	Never involve threats regarding the safety or reputation of anyone
	Could involve unsafe touches, unsafe images, boundary violations, feelings of discomfort, etc.	Might cause initial feelings of discomfort (if the person doesn't like surprises, or if the information is shocking)
	Are hidden	Are revealed
	Have potential to be kept forever	Are temporary
	Are never told	Are meant to be shared with others (eventually, at the right time)
	Exclude others	Are inclusive
	Have potential to harm, or hurt someone's feelings	Have potential to bring joy
	Can sometimes make someone feel unlovable	Would never make someone feel unlovable
	Sometimes require courage to share	Sometimes require patience when waiting to share
<b>SIMILARITIES</b>	Might sound like they are fun (although it may not truly be fun for everyone)	Are fun (usually for everyone)
	Might make the recipient or bystander "special" to be involved	Might make the recipient or bystander "special" to be involved
	Could involve gifts or privileges	Could involve gifts or privileges
	Can be a burden (because of the weight of the problem)	Can be a burden (because of the excitement and desire to reveal, since waiting can be hard)
	May cause feelings of fear (scary)	Might involve feelings of slight apprehension

**Part 2:** The Lesson Leader will pass out the worksheets and ask youth to read each question and circle / highlight the correct response from the columns on the right, then answer "why" and "what next?". Some examples may have several responses to identify. Answers will be discussed together as a large group once the youth finish the worksheets (where the Lesson Leader will utilize the Worksheet Answer Key below).

**Concluding statements to tell the youth once the activity is nearing completion:**

If you're in a situation where you don't feel right, or you feel scared or uncomfortable, or nervous, anxious, humiliated or embarrassing, listen to your intuition! If someone is asking you to keep a secret, it's ALWAYS OK to say "no" and it's very important to tell a safe adult. This also applies if something happened to you in the past. It's never too late to get help, even if the situation happened a long time ago.

**WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY:**

**Unsafe Secret or Safe Surprise: What, Why, Next?**

1. a.) Is it an unsafe secret or safe surprise... if someone tells you about a prank they are planning on doing to someone that you realize could hurt the person, but you're also told not to tell anyone?

Answer: *Unsafe secret*

b.) Why? *Because someone could get hurt; this may not be a safe activity and needs intervention.*

c.) What next? *You can always share something like this with your safe adults, and also with the friend who is going to be pranked. You could also ask the other friend not to do the prank at all. In more immediate and serious situations, you could also involve a supervisor or administrator who is on location.*

2. a.) **Is it an unsafe secret or safe surprise...** if you're spending time with your friend and notice he has bruises all over his arms and legs? Your friend told you that his dad gets really angry sometimes and that's "just what happens—if you're really my friend, you'll promise me you won't tell anyone about it!" You promise not to say anything, but now you're second guessing your decision.

Answer: *Unsafe secret*

*b.) Why? It violates the safety rules because your friend was hurt, and may continue to be hurt in the future. Keeping silent only protects the person who is causing the harm, which allows them to keep on doing what they want.*

*c.) What next? Talk to a safe adult, even though you promised you wouldn't. Real friends get their friends to the right person for help when it's needed. When it comes to the safety rules, it's OK to break promises.*

3. a.) **Is it an unsafe secret or safe surprise...** if one of your parents wants to have a special dinner because a family member had a big accomplishment? What if you just want to tell the person that you're planning something, without telling them WHAT you're planning?

Answer: *Safe surprise*

*b.) Why? Because it's temporary, it will be revealed and shared, it is inclusive, and will be fun! However, there may be a privacy component here about giving some details and not all of them.*

*c.) What next? You can always share this with your safe adults, and in the meantime, keep the information about the dinner/treat private for a short amount of time until it can be revealed to the family member. If you wanted to share parts of the information with the recipient, you should first communicate to the person planning the surprise to see what information might be shared, when it can be shared and why it should or should not be shared.*

4. a.) **Is it an unsafe secret or safe surprise...** if your teacher tells you she has a surprise for you, and gives you a surprise gift, but says, "maybe one day we can tell others, but let's keep it our little secret for now"? You really like the gift and want to keep it. And, you know that your parents wouldn't be able to afford it. Plus, it makes you feel special that your teacher cares enough about you to get you a present. But, it's confusing that she called it a surprise when she also said you couldn't talk about it yet.

Answer: *Unsafe secret*

*b.) Why? This is a tough one! It's referred to as a surprise gift because you were surprised to receive it, but you're being asked to keep a secret that may or may not be told to others. You should never be asked to keep a secret from both of your parents, even if it's "called" a surprise. Gifts and surprises are meant to be shared, and we don't keep secrets about gifts forever.*

*c.) What next? Talk to a safe adult, because your teacher may not have good intentions.*

5. a.) **Is it an unsafe secret or safe surprise...** if your parents tell you that they're going to have a baby, and that you're going to have a little sibling, and ask that you don't tell anyone until they're ready to share the information publicly? They also tell you that even when they start to talk about it, they don't want you to ever post pictures of the new baby on social media.

Answer: *Safe surprise*

**Note:** In this activity, the answers are listed in italicized fonts in the answer key. However, there may be additional reasons as to why the secret may be unsafe (and, conversely, why the surprise might be safe) that youth may identify that are not conveyed in the explanation.

Some questions might also share both surprising and secretive elements to them. They will require additional clarification relating to appropriate privacy. When children ask questions about how privacy comes into play, refer back to the definition and explanation listed in the lesson plan above, then compare it with the scenario in question and ask how it applies.

The Lesson Leader should be prepared for the youth to bring up other "what if" scenarios. Get through the worksheet first, and then address the additional scenarios. When this happens, refer to the chart and guide the students in deciding whether the proposed situation is a safe surprise or an unsafe secret.



**b.) Why?** *This is a tough one! It's a safe surprise that you can temporarily keep because it will eventually be revealed and shared on a certain date, plus it's joyful and exciting. However, it also involves a privacy boundary that your parents are placing about how much information to provide about your sibling online.*

**c.) What next?** *Keep the information about the pregnancy private for a short amount of time until you get the green light to reveal it with others per the boundaries that your parents have set. After that, you'll have to follow the personal safety boundaries that your parents have set about what can and can't be posted online about the new little one.*

6. **a.) Is it an unsafe secret or safe surprise...** if your cousin tells you an uncle you both know has been touching her inappropriately for the past year and has made her look at pornography online, but wants you to keep it private and not tell anyone? The uncle is a police officer, and is well known and respected in the community. She begs you not to say anything to anyone else. She specifically said, "look, it's over now, I'm over it, and nothing can be done because no one is going to believe me over a police officer! Plus, everybody likes him! Our parents will be really upset, will probably say I did something wrong or they'll say I'm lying, and I don't want to deal with that."

Answer: *Unsafe secret*

**b.) Why?** *It violates the safety rules because the cousin has personal body boundaries that were crossed—no one is allowed to touch your private parts unless to keep you clean and safe (and these touches are brief, and never a secret). Your cousin wants you to keep quiet because she is afraid of what could happen with her parents not believing her, even though by not saying anything other children could be molested, too. Sometimes people use their powerful jobs or likable personalities to be able to do what they want without caring about how others are hurt or affected, and that is never OK when it comes to personal safety boundaries—and makes it even more important that inappropriate behavior comes to light. Even though your cousin says that everything is OK and over now, this may not be true and your cousin may not realize the psychological effects of abuse. Sometimes when people confide in us, they are asking for help—even if they tell us not to tell anyone else. Secrets can be painful, and can cause sadness.*

**c.) What next?** *The right thing to do is to tell a safe adult right away. If family doesn't believe the information, then it's time to take the information to someone who can do something about it, such as a guidance counselor at school.*

7. **a.) Is it an unsafe secret or safe surprise...** if an older teen pulls up a girl's dress at school, takes a picture so others can see her underwear and bra underneath, and then messages it to others? Several of your classmates know about it, and have made fun of her, but no one wants to tell on him. You also know that the girl has been very upset, and has been skipping school because of it.

Answer: *Unsafe secret*

**b.) Why?** *It violates the safety rules because your friend's personal boundaries were violated several times. First, they were violated when someone pulled her skirt up, again when someone showed an image of her private parts (bra/chest/underwear—areas covered by a bathing suit) to others, again when her picture is shared electronically by others, and then every single time someone looks at the image. Even though this situation is including others in what they consider to be "fun", it's causing your friend feelings of sadness and fear, and certainly has great potential to harm your friend and her reputation.*

**c.) What next?** *Let your friend know that you're there for her, and tell a safe adult right away. This is the right thing to do whether any of the people in the situation are your friends or not.*

8. **a.) Is it an unsafe secret or safe surprise...** if you're in what you consider to be a loving relationship, but the other person doesn't seem to care when you say "no" when it comes to your body—and you don't want anyone else to know? Most of the relationship is awesome, but there are a lot of times where you're hurt and sad, and you feel like your boundaries aren't respected. You don't know if it's a big enough deal to talk to anyone about,

**Note:** In all of these scenarios about unsafe secrets, remind the youth that whether these types of scenarios happen to them, or happen to someone they know—it's can be really difficult to talk about situations that involve abuse and boundaries. Encourage them to always communicate with a safe adult—but if they aren't ready for that, then they can talk to a friend first, to ask that friend to help them have the courage to speak to a safe adult.

**Explain:** If you're the friend, do everything you can to get the person to the safe adult when involved with an unsafe secret, even if it means that you have to be the one to tell the safe adult on your own.

because you've been told that all relationships have ups and downs. Plus—you don't want people to judge your boyfriend/girlfriend and say bad things about them, since they don't know the person like you do.

Answer: *Unsafe secret*

**b.) Why?** *It's an unsafe secret because you feel uncomfortable, and it violates the safety rules because your boundaries are not being upheld. Saying "no" is a powerful boundary, and should be honored, especially when it comes to your body and personal boundaries. You deserve respect and have a right to be safe—and feel safe, especially in the context of a relationship. It's true that relationships can have ups and downs, but if you're consistently feeling hurt and sad, it's often a sign that something is wrong, and needs to be addressed. Even if people don't know your girlfriend/boyfriend like you do, it doesn't mean that they can't objectively say that something is wrong.*

**c.) What next?** *Tell a safe adult right away.*

9. **a.) Is it an unsafe secret or safe surprise...** if your coach asks you questions about your private parts, including what they look like? The coach is known as a "cool" person, and seems to never really care about the rules. You don't really want to discuss your private parts with your coach, but feel stuck because you don't want your spot on the team to be jeopardized. You answered the coach's question, but you don't know if you should say anything about the encounter or just keep it quiet.

Answer: *Unsafe secret*

**b.) Why?** *If you were to keep quiet about this encounter, it would be an unsafe secret because it involves a situation that has caused discomfort, and it crosses your boundaries. You never have to speak about what your private parts look like to others. Safe adults should never ask you questions about what your private parts look like, unless you've disclosed discomfort or pain, or it's someone like a parent or doctor who's helping to ensure that you're safe and healthy.*

**c. What next?** *Talk to a safe adult.*

10. **a.) Is it an unsafe secret or safe surprise...** if your friend tells you that they have a crush on a friend and asks you not to say anything to anyone?

Answer: *Safe surprise*

**b.) Why?** *This is a tough one! It's a safe surprise that's probably temporary and fun, that you can keep from the object of the crush. However, it doesn't mean that you have to keep the information quiet from your safe adults—who are always safe to communicate with about surprises or secrets.*

**c.) What next?** *Keep the information private from peers or the object of the crush, but, you can always tell a safe adult about information like this.*

#### ACTIVITY OPTION #4: Boundary Rules and Safety—Secret cryptogram

**Background:** It's important that we teach youth that it's not OK to keep unsafe secrets—not even seemingly little ones like eating sweets when we're not supposed to or watching a movie we know we aren't supposed to see. The reason for this is because we are letting them know beyond a shadow of a doubt that it's not their responsibility to keep larger, graver secrets either—such as someone who is violating the safety rules with unsafe actions or unsafe touches.

**Preparation:** The Lesson Leader should review the Key Vocabulary words as part of the preparation for this lesson. Allow for enough time to include the discussion and the completion of the worksheet during the class period.

**Activity:** This activity addresses appropriate boundaries, secrets, surprises and safety plans via interactive discussion, and then gives children an opportunity to share what they've learned by completing a worksheet.

**Discussion:** Ask youth the following questions, listen to their responses, gently correct if necessary, and explain the answers:

**Note:** The worksheet template for this activity is included in the downloaded set of materials at the end of this packet.

#### SUPPLIES

Writing utensils  
Pre-printed worksheets



- Have you ever thought about your safety boundaries? What are they?
  - Say “No!” if someone shares unsafe or inappropriate material/images
  - Try to leave the situation if possible
  - Tell a safe adult as soon as possible if you’re scared, uncomfortable, or if someone tries to touch your private parts
- Why are safety boundaries important?
  - They’re important because they keep us safe, and they let us know that we have a right to be safe.
  - They also give us tools to communicate with a safe adult if we have a problem, if we’re scared, or if we’re uncomfortable.
- What are secrets?
  - Secrets are pieces of information or actions that people don’t want us to share, or that we are scared of sharing.
- How do we know how to identify secrets?
  - They’re kept hidden and are meant to never be told. They keep other people in the dark, and can make us feel scared or uncomfortable, or sad. They also sometimes involve situations where someone might get into trouble if the secret is shared.
- How do secrets relate to safety boundaries?
  - Boundary safety involves rules like when we tell a safe adult when we’re uncomfortable or scared, and how we tell a safe adult right away if someone tries to touch or see our private parts. Secrets are an important part of our boundary safety plan, because they impact our safety. When it comes to your safety and the boundary rules, it’s not OK to keep secrets.
- Can we keep little secrets?
  - If someone tells us that it’s just a little secret and that it’s OK to keep it, it’s still not ok! We can keep surprises for a very short amount of time because we know we will eventually share the surprise, but must always tell unsafe secrets to our safe adults.
- What if our best friend asks us to?
  - Sometimes our best friends might ask us to keep secrets, but even in those situations it isn’t OK to keep them.
- What if no one told us a secret, but we feel like we have a problem? Can we keep that a secret?
  - Problems can be big and small; they can be small, little things like puzzles or big things like emergencies—and often need to be solved. They can involve fears and emotions.
  - Sometimes we put boundaries in place to prevent problems, or to be more prepared for them.
  - We must also talk to our safe adults when we feel like we have a big or little problem. Problems are never meant to be kept silent or kept secret, because that is unsafe. Problems should always be shared with people who can help us, because we shouldn’t carry heavy burdens on our own. (Give age-appropriate examples of sharing the load).
- Are secrets and surprises the same thing?
  - No, sometimes they might look similar but they aren’t the same. Surprises are happy and joyful. They’re temporary, and meant to be shared with others, like when we have a surprise party, or when we buy a special present for someone’s birthday, or if we’ve made a special desert for someone because they did a good job. These can always be shared with safe adults.
- What do we know about safe friends and safe adults?
  - Safe people won’t hurt you without a good reason and won’t intentionally confuse you. They listen to and consistently respect boundaries, and follow the rules. [Explain that a child may have many safe friends and adults. Give children examples of adult behavior that could hurt them, but may be necessary for the child’s safety, i.e. medical exams, vaccinations, throat swabs, removing splinters, stopping a child from running into the road, etc.]
  - If you have a problem or encounter a situation that violates the safety rules—or even just makes you feel uncomfortable, it is right to tell a safe adult about it. No one should ever ask you to keep unsafe touches a secret—even if they tickled or felt good. It’s never OK for anyone to make you feel uncomfortable, or unsafe. You have a right to be safe!
- What is privacy, and what is OK to keep private?
  - Privacy is primarily about being respectful of a person’s personal boundaries or information. The things we appropriately can keep private include beliefs, opinions, ideas, traits, etc.

- We also keep other things private, such as our private parts, which we keep private underneath our clothing when we're in public.
- Don't I also have a right to privacy regarding my boundaries? Where is the line?
  - Yes, you do, but not when the information or situation it could hurt you or someone else.
  - Maintaining and honoring someone's privacy does not result in hurting them or others, or compromising someone's safety. And, complete privacy is not always applicable when it deals with our safety boundaries. In a situation where boundaries have been violated, someone is hurt or has the potential to be hurt, we should keep the information private insofar as we only tell the people who need to know to help us (and them) stay safe—such as our safe adults or other people who can help us.
  - Privacy and secrecy are often confused—and the main difference is that unsafe secrecy involves situations where we deliberately keep something from someone else usually out of fear, where keeping the secret can negatively impact or harm ourselves or someone else.

**Ask the following question, and take note of the children's answers:** What are examples that we must always share with safe adults?

**Supply them with additional examples that would automatically prompt them to speak to a safe adult.**

- If someone tries to touch our private parts, or our friends' private parts.
- If someone gives you a present and tells you not to tell.
- If someone says, "it's our little secret" when they tell you something important.
- If someone gives you a special treat or game, and says that you should keep it just between the two of you.
- If someone says mean things about a friend, but tells you not to repeat to anyone else.
- If someone tells you how a friend was hurt, but asks you not to tell anyone else about it.

**Say the following to youth as you pass out the template sheets:**

Now that we have a better idea of our boundary rules, and unsafe secrets and safe surprises, we're going to complete this cryptogram.

**Concluding statements:**

When people ask us to keep unsafe secrets, it's a problem. And problems should never be kept secret. So, the cryptogram is what it feels like when you have a problem. It can feel all "tangled" up, confusing with lots of different possible options—that can make you feel stuck. Sometimes it might even feel hopeless. But that's not true! Sometimes we just need to see problems from a different angle—and friends can help us do that, and they can always help with getting us to a safe adult. There's always someone who can help us when we don't know how best to help ourselves.

Even if it feels like you have a really big problem, there's nothing that is so big that you can't get help. You always need to communicate scary problems or unsafe secrets to a safe adult.

**Worksheet Answer Key:**

**Cryptogram phrase:** SECRETS ARE NEVER OK WHEN IT COMES TO SAFETY

**Cryptogram key:**

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
11	7	10	20	6	5	12	24	14	1	25	18	13	2	9	19	16	17	21	26	15	8	4	22	23	3

**ACTIVITY OPTION #5: Relationships, Secrets and Surprises—Crossword**

**Background:** This activity presents scenarios discussing healthy relationships, secrets and surprises, and then completing a fill-in-the-blank crossword puzzle. Ultimately, youth will learn that there are no secrets when it comes to personal safety, and that they must always communicate with a safe adult.

**Note:** The worksheet template for this activity is included in the downloaded set of materials at the end of this packet.

**Activity:** The purpose of this 2-part activity is to utilize a safety discussion to help children apply their safety knowledge to successfully complete the worksheet and be better prepared in the event they're in a tough situation involving unhealthy relationships or secrets.

### SUPPLIES

Writing utensils  
Pre-printed worksheets

After the discussion of Part 1, children will be presented with a crossword worksheet in Part 2, with opportunities to fill in the blanks for use in the crossword.

**Preparation:** The Lesson Leader should review the Key Vocabulary words as part of the preparation for this lesson. Allow for enough time to include the discussion and the completion of the worksheet during the class period.

**Discussion:** **Part I: The Lesson Leader will discuss the following items before providing and explaining the worksheet.** Questions to help the youth brainstorm are included in the discussion text:

All relationships have boundaries—and good ones have healthy boundaries. Healthy relationships that we have with our friends, families and loved ones have specific aspects of them that are important. For example, in healthy relationships, we aren't afraid to set and uphold our boundaries, and conversely, other people respect those boundaries. When people respect our boundaries, we feel safe and comfortable. Some boundaries are a "given"; they're obvious—such as, it's obvious that it's not OK to punch someone in the face. In relationships, sometimes boundaries aren't as obvious, and it's important that when you have them, that you communicate them with others. And it's equally important that the other person honors your boundaries.

All of us have safe people in our lives who are there to protect us. They won't hurt us without a good reason, such as having to take us to the doctor to get a shot, get medicine or remove a splinter, etc.,—which aren't fun, but they do protect us and we need them to be healthy. Safe adults and friends won't try to confuse or scare us. They listen to our boundaries and the rules that our parents have given us, and they follow the rules. Healthy relationships mean that people ask our permission, care about our feelings, and are respectful of our opinions even when they're different. Healthy relationships include people who uphold our boundaries, including those that are physical, verbal, emotional, etc. You might have lots of safe friends and safe adults who participate with you in mutually safe, healthy relationships.

How do you know what your boundaries are? Sometimes we don't, and we have to figure them out! There are non-negotiable boundaries, such as the boundary safety rules, which include the fact that you have a right to be safe, and that no one is allowed to violate that right or touch you or your private parts, or make you feel uncomfortable—whether online or in person. Boundaries include figuring out what you do and don't like, what makes you comfortable vs. uncomfortable, what makes you feel fearful, and how you should be treated with respect.

What are some tips to setting boundaries? Are there any others that you can think of?

- Take the time to figure out what you do and don't like
- Don't be afraid to say "no"
- Be honest about what you want and what makes you feel comfortable—communication is important
- Be specific
- Be consistent
- Be careful not to compromise your personal values for what others want

Unhealthy relationships are different, because there are usually issues with boundaries. This is different from just misunderstanding one another—which can happen even in healthy relationships and can clear up with communication and respect. There are certain things about unhealthy relationships that would automatically make them a problem—such as if the other person:

- Tries to alienate you from others
- Gives you ultimatums about what you can and can't do
- Threatens you (either to harm you, someone else, or even themselves, if you don't do something they want)
- Creates unrealistic rules
- Lies to you
- Gives you silent treatment
- Gets jealous of your interactions with others
- Tries to control you
- Won't take "no" for an answer, etc.

In addition to unhealthy relationships, there are sometimes people in our lives who are unsafe. They do risky things, and sometimes scare us. They don't always listen to our boundaries, and sometimes they do things that we know are wrong, and make us feel uncomfortable. We know when someone is unsafe because they don't follow the rules or listen to our boundaries—like when we say "NO" or tell them that we don't like something. You're allowed to say "no" when it comes to your boundaries and the safety rules. That's what it means to place a boundary, and you have a right to be safe.



Unsafe people sometimes also ask us to keep an unsafe secret. They might make us promise not to tell, and we might be fearful that we are going to get into trouble if we do tell about the secret. They might even threaten to do something bad to us or someone else we know. Sometimes it makes us feel uncomfortable, and sad. Ultimately, it could mean they aren't being respectful of our boundaries when we feel this way as a result.

What are some other ways that we feel when our boundaries have been affected? Examples include: Angry, upset, hurt, embarrassed, ashamed, guilty, "unpleasant", violated, "off", doubtful, minimized, disrespected, ill, nauseated, etc.

Unsafe secrets are a part of unhealthy relationships. It's important to know that there can't be any unsafe secrets when it comes to your safety. It's wrong for an adult or another child to ask you to keep a secret about your safety or about someone else's safety—especially unsafe touches—because that's a way for people to get hurt.

It's also possible that our *safe* friends and *safe* adults in our healthy relationships might tell us to keep a secret. They might not realize that asking you to keep secrets is unsafe for everyone. It's also OK if someone has made you promise to keep a secret in the past, because maybe they didn't know the safety rules. However, it's really important, regardless of whether it's a safe or unsafe person, that we always tell another safe adult when someone makes us feel uncomfortable or makes us promise to keep an unsafe secret.

Sometimes it takes a lot of courage to speak up for ourselves or others about boundaries, or communicate to a safe adult when there's a problem—and that's OK. You can also ask a friend to go with you to talk to a safe adult. And, you can be the friend in a reversed situation, who goes and gets the necessary adult help. This is what being a true friend is all about.

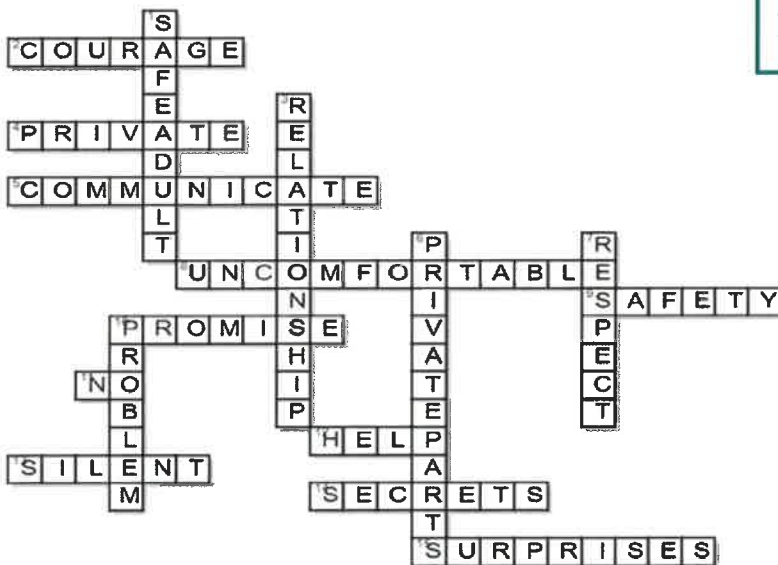
**Part II: The Lesson Leader will pass out the worksheet and narrate instructions.** Invite children to complete the worksheet. A discussion with everyone will follow to go over the answers and address the concluding statements.

**Concluding statements:**

When people ask us to keep unsafe secrets, it's a problem. And problems should never be kept secret. It can feel all "tangled" up, confusing with lots of different possible directions—that can make you feel stuck when you hit a dead end. Sometimes it might even feel hopeless. But that's not true! There's always someone who can help.

Even if it feels like you have a really big problem, there's nothing that is so big that you can't get help. You always need to communicate scary problems or unsafe secrets to a safe adult.

**WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY:**



**Note:** The Lesson Leader may lessen the difficulty of the crossword by writing / displaying a "word bank" on the board for the youth, shown below.

Word Bank	
surprises	
secrets	
courage	
relationship	
safety	
uncomfortable	
help	
no	
private parts	
silent	
promise	
respect	
problem	
private	
safe adult	
communicate	

**ACTIVITY OPTION #6: Secrets online**

**Background:** This activity helps youth to understand that the same safety rules that we follow in person are to be observed online as well.

**Note:** The worksheet template for this activity is included in the downloaded set of materials at the end of this packet.

**Preparation:** The Lesson Leader should review the Key Vocabulary words as part of the preparation for this lesson. The Lesson Leader should allow for enough time to include the discussion and the completion of the worksheet during the class period.

The Lesson Leader will also need to record the vocabulary for the worksheet's Word Bank in an area large and visible enough for the youth to see it; this should be completed prior to starting the Lesson itself, although the Lesson Leader may choose to keep it covered during the discussion.

**SUPPLIES**

Dry erase board or Chalk board  
Dry erase marker or Chalk  
Writing utensils  
Pre-printed worksheets

**WORD BANK**

boundaries	anonymous	personal information	uncomfortable
unsafe	threats	secretly	private
kind	internet	secret	chat
emails	passwords	safe adults	report
pictures	private parts	safe	promise
twice	someone else	protect	

**Activity:** This activity addresses appropriate online activities, boundaries, secrets, surprises and safety plans via interactive discussion, and then gives youth an opportunity to share what they've learned by completing a safety fill-in-the blank worksheet.

The Lesson Leader will need to decide if the youth will work in pairs or individually for the worksheet portion of the lesson in Part II.

**Directions:** Begin by discussing the elements in Part I. Then, hand out the fill-in-the-blank worksheet and instruct the children to insert the correct word(s) in each sentence.

**Discussion:** **Part I:** The Lesson Leader will discuss the following items before providing and explaining the worksheet:

There are lots of good qualities about the Internet! What are some of the things that you do on the Internet (or ways you utilize the Internet)?

- Play games
- Social media
- Watch videos
- Video chat with family and friends
- Homework, projects & research
- Post videos and images
- Learning something new
- Connecting with friends

Even though we know there are many positive elements of the Internet, there are also areas that can be confusing, and even dangerous.

Sometimes there are images, stories, mean comments, threats and videos online that make us feel uncomfortable—or we know they're inappropriate and against the safety rules. In different polls—even in other countries—researchers have found that there are many youth who have had something happen online that upset them. Have you ever encountered a situation on the Internet that has made you feel uncomfortable? Or anxious? Maybe even scared?

Sometimes we feel like we have to keep what we see on the Internet a secret. Or, someone we talk to online might threaten us and tell us that if we tell, we will get in trouble. But these are the times that we need to make sure we bring our safe adult in! Telling a safe adult doesn't mean that we won't be allowed to use the Internet anymore. Sometimes we need to do more than just talk to a safe adult—we need to report to the proper authorities, whether it be within the app or website, or even to the police or FBI.

It's important that we never keep it a secret when we want to meet a friend online. You never know who the person really is, or what they might do.

Do you know how to “block” someone online, or “report” them if they do unsafe things? Do you feel comfortable telling a safe adult what happened? Do you have any safe adults?

**Part 2:** The Lesson Leader will uncover the Word Bank that has been recorded in an area large enough for the students to see. Then, pass out the worksheet to the youth.

Instruct whether youth will work on the worksheet in pairs or individually.

Give them time to complete it, and then go over the correct answers with them at the end.

**Concluding statement:** Remember that if you ever need help reporting anything scary or upsetting, you can always go to a safe adult and talk to them.

**Note:** For added elements of difficulty in Part 2, consider having the activity be a race to see who can finish first with inserting all of the correct words. You can also invite the youth to cover up the word bank to try and solve the puzzle without it.

### WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY:

#### Situations we might encounter online:

1. It's important that we don't give out our personal information online, like our name, address, date of birth, school names, parent names or phone numbers.
2. When we're home, we don't open our front doors to people we don't know. We have to be just as careful on the Internet if someone sends us an invitation to chat or talk online, because we don't know who that person really is—even if we think we do.
3. The Internet creates an anonymous environment, where anyone can pretend to be anyone else.
4. Never meet someone face-to-face if you only know them through the Internet, especially if your parents don't know.
5. It's important to be kind to people online, and communicate with safe adults if we find people being mean to us, or to others. Sometimes this means that we might need our safe adults to help us report the information.
6. It's not OK to talk or message with someone secretly online.
7. If someone online does something mean to you, like says bad things, makes threats, sends you inappropriate images or emails, tell a safe adult right away.
8. Always tell a safe adult if something makes you feel uncomfortable while you're using the Internet.
9. We must always guard our passwords, and never give them out to others; we also shouldn't use other peoples'.
10. When online, never post or email pictures of yourself that show where you live or go to school.
11. Remember that you're the one in charge when you're using the Internet. If you begin to feel uncomfortable for any reason, anytime, leave and find a safe adult.
12. Also, if you ever encounter images of someone's private parts, you must always tell a safe adult immediately—and never keep it a secret, even if someone makes you promise not to tell!
13. We know that people are unsafe online if they violate our safety rules, or if they don't care about our boundaries.
14. The older we become, the more we begin to evaluate what information should be kept private, vs. what is an unsafe secret and a safe surprise. Passwords, for example, should be kept private.
15. The internet isn't all terrible! In fact, there are lots of positive elements of the Internet—we just need to be aware of the areas that can be confusing, and even dangerous—and know how to report the material when necessary to protect ourselves or help someone else to be safe.
16. Think twice and review the item before you post it on the Internet, or hit “send” for an email or text. Could it hurt someone? Could it affect your reputation? Would you want your closest family to see it?

#### ACTIVITY OPTION #7: Netsmartz—Mike-Tosis

**Background:** This short video is shared with permission from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and can be played for children as part of an activity to help them understand the difference between secrets and surprises. It is designed to open a simple discussion with children about boundaries and safety.

**Description:** Secret Crush + Text Message = Big Trouble. Will Allie be able to stop the text message trail before it gets to Mike Chang?

Click here for the link: <https://www.netsmartz.org/NSTeens/Miketosis>



**Discussion:** Say the following to youth after you watch the video:

Have you ever had a similar situation happen? This was kind-of a funny video, right?

Unfortunately, sometimes we see things on the Internet or via text about other people that don't end in such a good outcome.

Other scenarios include situations that could be hurtful or harmful to others' reputations, or even our own.

Sometimes we even post information about ourselves, including pictures, that could hurt our, or others' reputations.

What's your opinion? Do you feel that you have a right to privacy online? While it might seem like you do, the answer is no. Anything that you post online is the property of the owner of the site or application, and you agree to that when you accept the terms and conditions when you make an account, or when you actually post on the service. Even if you have strict privacy settings, anyone who can see your account can still exploit it and the information on it.

Sometimes we feel like we have to keep what we see on the Internet a secret. Or, someone we talk to online might threaten us and tell us that if we tell, we will get in trouble. But these are the times that we need to make sure we bring our safe adult in! Telling a safe adult doesn't mean that we won't be allowed to use the Internet anymore. Sometimes we need to do more than just talk to a safe adult—we need to report to the proper authorities, whether it be within the app or website, or even to the police or FBI.

Let's recap unsafe secrets and safe surprises. What's the difference an unsafe secret and a safe surprise?

- A secret is something kept hidden, never told or unexplained. Secrets exclude others and have potential to harm, sometimes causing the person involved to feel frightened or uncomfortable, fearful or sad. Secrets also send the message to children that they, or someone else, will get into trouble if the secret is shared [For [example](#), let children know that there are no secrets when it comes to personal and physical safety. Tell youth it's wrong for an adult or another child to ask to keep a secret about safety—especially unsafe touches—because that's a way for people to get hurt. If an individual tries to make a child keep a secret or makes him / her feel frightened, the child must know to communicate this information right away to a parent or caring adult—and be reassured that the child will be protected regardless of threats or seeming consequences of "telling".]
- Surprises are typically happy. They cause feelings of happiness and joy. They are exciting, and temporary—meaning they will be revealed within a specific timeframe. As surprises are usually fun, they include activities like birthday surprises, gifts, trips and special treats. Surprises are inclusive and meant to be shared with others.

**Concluding thoughts to tell the youth:** If you've seen OR posted something that makes you feel uncomfortable, or that you realize now could be a problem, you should tell a safe adult. You'll want to do it right away, because depending on the situation, you may need to report that information to the website/app service, or in really bad situations, to the police. That's the right thing to do for yourself, and also for your friends. Reporting a dangerous or harmful situation might help stop that person from doing what they did to you to others.

**End the lesson with a prayer**

The Lesson Leader may invite the children to create their own prayer, he/she may lead a prayer, or may use the suggested prayer below.

*Dear God,*

*Even though we are each special and different, there are ways that we are alike because you made each of us in your image and therefore worthy of respect. I want to live as you have commanded me to live, with peace even in times of confusion or uncertainty. Please help me to remember to respect myself, just as I want others to respect me. Help me to keep strong boundaries, and to be kind and respectful toward others. Please also give me the courage and confidence to speak up for myself, and for my friends if I see them being harmed or threatened.*

*Amen*