

How to stay safe as a child or young person

The number one priority as parents and responsible adults should be to keep you safe and protected at all times. This information is one way of doing that. Awareness and knowledge is the key to helping keep you safe.

Things to understand

God loves you and made you special.

We should always respect the sacred dignity of ourselves and others.

Most adults will help you stay safe. Sadly some adults hurt children. It is never OK for adults to hurt children.

People like your parents/guardians, a policeman, a teacher, a minister, etc. can generally be trusted to help you stay safe. If a 'safe adult' ever makes you feel uncomfortable immediately let another adult know about it. Your parents can help you identify who are some of the 'safe adults' who are around you.

Adults who work with children or young people at your church make a special promise that they will always act as a safe adult and never hurt you.

Boundaries are important in our lives. Boundaries are limits that protect us from being used by another person. Treating ourselves and others with respect will eliminate many problems in our actions and relationships. Boundaries are like warning signs near a construction area, if you cross them you are in a dangerous area...even if it *seems* like you are still safe. There are boundaries that our society generally agrees upon, like when you meet a new person you might shake their hand, but you don't give them a big hug and a kiss. You need to set personal boundaries, if someone does something that makes you feel uncomfortable you can and need to ask them to stop or get a safe adult to make them stop.

Grooming is a way of being "played". Adults or older teens will sometimes "groom" a child. Grooming is very dangerous. Sneaky people "groom" others in order to cross the boundaries and eventually hurt them.

Some adults are mean and may try to hurt you. Sometimes it is easy to identify a dangerous situation, like if a stranger is trying to get you to get into their car or truck. Sometimes the danger is not so clear, adults that are not mean, but sneaky and pretend to like you but little by little do things to cross your boundaries, things that make you uncomfortable and are even harmful to you. Grooming behaviors are warning signs that you can watch out for to avoid falling into the dangers of a sneaky adult.

If you find out that a friend of yours has been hurt or is being groomed, you can help them to talk with your parents or another safe adult. If they are afraid and won't talk to anyone else, then you can talk with your parents or another safe adult so that your friend can get the good help that they need.

Know how adults should act toward you and keep boundaries:

Adults should be kind and respectful to young people. (They observe the appropriate boundaries.)

Adults should act their own age, not like someone your age. (This is a boundary.)

Adults should help you be safe.

Adults should encourage you to be good.

Adults should not make you feel uncomfortable or break your boundaries.

Adults should not touch or tickle you if it makes you feel uncomfortable. (This is a boundary.)

Adults should not do bad things around you. (This is a boundary.)

Adults should not ask you to keep secrets. They should never say "Don't tell your parents about this", or "This should just be between us, it's our secret". (This is a boundary.)

Adults should not touch you in the areas covered by a swim suit. (This is a boundary.)

Adults should not give you gifts that your parents don't know about. (This is a boundary.)

Good Habits will help keep you safe:

If anyone does something that makes you feel uncomfortable (even a 'safe adult' or even someone in your family) tell your parents or a safe adult.

Be respectful to adults, expect them to act like adults, not like someone your own age.

Ask your parent's permission before you let someone take your picture.

Always tell your parents if and adult or older child asks you to be their friend.

Avoid being alone with an adult who is not a family member.

Always let your parents know about anything someone gives you. If someone gives you a gift thank them and ask your parents if it is OK for you to keep the gift.

Never agree to keep secrets from your parents/guardians.

If you or someone you know is being hurt you can contact the police or:

**State of Texas Child Abuse Hotline
(800) 252-5400 www.txabusehotline.org
Texas Youth Hotline (800) 210-2278**

If you ever see or hear of an adult working at Church acting badly toward a child or young person, you can help the Church by reporting it. Talk to a parent or safe adult and contact:

**Fr. Gavin Vaverek
Promoter of Justice, Diocese of Tyler
903-266-2159 Email: promoter@dioceseoftyler.org**

Further information can be found www.dioceseoftyler.org