

Lesson 5 for Grades 6—8

Being a Safe Friend

PRINCIPLE

Children must know that being a friend means that we “do the right thing” when it comes to healthy friendships with their peers: meaning we recognize unsafe situations, intervene (when possible) and get the information to a safe adult.

CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE

“Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one finds a treasure. Faithful friends are beyond price, no amount can balance their worth.”
—Sirach 6:14-15

“Do not be a foe instead of a friend.”
—Sirach 6:1

OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, the adult lesson leader teaches and reinforces students responding with action when they or a friend are presented with unsafe situations. After Lesson 5, children should be better able to:

- Participate in healthy friendships
- Recognize that they can do something to help themselves and their friends when confronted with unsafe situations
- Respond appropriately to unsafe situations involving themselves or their friends:
 - Say “No!” if involved in an unsafe situation
 - Try to leave the situation if they feel uncomfortable
 - Tell a safe adult as soon as possible (even if it happened to a friend)
- Technology Component: Understand similar actions apply for Online activities, too.

Background for Lesson Leaders:

Before beginning this lesson, the Lesson Leader should complete the VIRTUS Lesson Leader Orientation, and/or read the VIRTUS *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide*, as it gives a wealth of information regarding boundaries. While adults are the main protectors of children, there are skills children can learn to better protect themselves and each other when faced with tough situations where caring adults aren't present.

This message of being a “safe friend” needs special attention for two reasons. First, the idea of safe friends should not be confused with the adult's specific role when it comes to appropriate boundaries with youth. In this safety lesson, the message of being a “safe friend” is primarily geared to assist youth with understanding *how to be a safe friend to themselves and to other youth*. Lesson Leaders are not being asked to be friends with children or teens; rather, Lesson Leaders and caring adults in the life of a youth are always called to be “friendly” with youth, and not their “friends.” This is an important boundary distinction. In the healthiest of relationships between adults and youth, adults are known to be safe.

Second, the underlying message of this lesson focuses on healthy relationships and boundaries. Please be very clear in your communication to youth in that they are *not responsible* for each other. Misinforming youth by saying that one person's welfare is a youth's responsibility could make a youth feel more guilt if they weren't able to prevent or stop abuse from occurring for themselves or a friend. The distinction for this lesson is that there are times when youth are being abused, or they know a peer is in need of help, but, they don't always know the best way to assist. Being a safe friend means that children do the “right thing” for themselves, and for each other—meaning that they perform action, or intervene in safe ways when they are aware of a problem.

Keep in mind some of these myths to unpack during the lessons: youth may make promises with their peers to keep safety secrets in an attempt to protect them, not realizing that it's most important to deliver knowledge about unsafe situations to safe adults. They'll also need to know that it's never their fault (nor will it ever be their fault) if they or someone they know has been abused, or is hurting.

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 youth in this age range is designed to open a simple discussion about personal boundary safety. The brief video 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 critical components needed to teach youth how to protect themselves. They learn best by "doing;" not just listening. Please communicate with your coordinator to obtain video access.

ACTIVITY OPTION #2: Review and discuss key vocabulary words

- **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.]
- **Uncomfortable**—Experiencing discomfort that leaves one feeling uneasy, sometimes causing anxiety or feelings of nausea. [It might be a feeling in the "pit of your stomach" or it could be the hairs standing up on the back of your neck. You may freeze, want to fight or feel like running away from the situation.]
- **Confusing**—is something that is hard to figure out because it doesn't make sense, it is unclear or puzzling. To cause confusion is to cause an inability to think clearly or to be misleading. [An example is a big, messy knot—it can be confusing because it's hard to figure out where each part goes how to straighten it all out.]
- **Respecting boundaries**—we should have respect for ourselves, and respect for others. Respect for ourselves means we understand our dignity and value as a person, and work to create or maintain boundaries to protect ourselves. We feel upset or uncomfortable when someone doesn't honor our own boundaries, and we communicate with the right person if we need help. Respecting another's boundaries means you care about them, and won't do anything that would bring them harm, and that you communicate with the right person to get them help if they are being harmed by someone else. [Give children examples of respecting others, i.e. not calling people mean names, not hitting others, following rules at school or at home, stopping an activity when someone asks, letting an adult know when someone is in pain or hurt, etc.]
- **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. [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 help 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.
- **Secluded**—Kept apart from social contact with other people. Seclusion is the act of secluding or shutting out. Similar, but different than keeping “isolated,” which is the state of being detached or separated.
- **Rude**—describes behavior where someone inadvertently or accidentally does or says something hurtful. Rudeness is usually unplanned, and not *intended* to hurt. [Examples include social awkwardness, such as burping into someone’s face, cutting someone off, behaving narcissistically, having poor manners, bragging about an accomplishment, etc.]
- **Mean**—describes behavior where someone says or does something hurtful on purpose, once (maybe twice). The aim is to intentionally hurt, and is often motivated by anger. [Examples include putting someone down so the mean person looks/sounds better, making fun of how the person dresses or looks, insulting person’s skills or intelligence or saying / behaving in an unkind way after a disagreement, saying things like: “why would you wear that, it looks terrible on you” or “you’re so dumb, you should quit.”]
- **Bullying**—is different from being rude or mean. It is cruel; the intentional, repeated exposure of negative and aggressive behaviors to a targeted person over time. The bully will say or do something intentionally hurtful, and keep doing it, without a sense of remorse. A key aspect is the ongoing pattern, involving an imbalance of power where the bully has more control or influence. [Examples include physical, verbal and emotional aggression, in-person and online; social exclusion, hazing others, spreading rumors or inappropriate content, cyberbullying, etc.]

ACTIVITY OPTION #3: Apply the Continuum: Passive, Aggressive or Assertive?

Activity: This activity has two parts, discussion and application. Children are empowered to better protect themselves and help others by learning assertive language skills, with an opportunity to practice with role playing.

Background: Teaching children how to be more assertive involves several factors that are important for both the Lesson Leader and the youth to know, including breaking down commonly-held myths about what “assertive” means, increasing the youth’s overall self confidence, helping them to understand the idea of self-respect and “being a friend to oneself” and to others, and giving them tools and the actual language needed to create and uphold boundaries, as well as avenues and safety networks for when they’re uncomfortable, afraid or in need of help for themselves or others.

Preparation: In preparing for this activity, review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide*. The Lesson Leader will want to create an environment of togetherness and openness, understanding this topic may bring about discomfort or embarrassment; some youth may want to “blend in” or have a sense of anonymity. Do not force youth to speak if they do not wish to; instead, invite, inspire and encourage. Gather the materials needed to draw the “assertive” continuum in a space large enough for everyone to see, and have it written already on the board prior to beginning the lesson.

Directions: Invite the students to sit in seats in a way that creates an atmosphere of togetherness. Lead and facilitate a dialog with youth about standing up for themselves and others by being assertive.

Discussion: **PART 1: DISCUSSION. Say the following:** Sometimes we are in relationships or friendships with others where something isn’t quite right. You might feel taken advantage of, bullied—maybe even abused. Maybe someone else always has their way and you’re the one who has to sacrifice what you want. Do you feel like you always know how to say “no?” It’s important that we know how to stand up for ourselves in really tricky situations, and get help for ourselves and our friends when needed. We are going to talk about being *assertive*.

SUPPLIES

Dry erase board (or something similar)
Dry erase markers

Note: For the Lesson Leader, part of teaching children healthy, assertive behavior means honoring, strengthening and upholding the youth’s boundaries when they set them. An assertive youth who is learning healthy boundaries needs to also know that they have several safe adults as part of their safety network; someone they can go to for help regardless of the circumstances. Children do not always go to their parents when they are involved in an abusive situation for a variety of reasons, often because of fear of the reaction, and also for fear of getting into trouble. If you are the person with whom a child feels safe enough to disclose, then you must listen carefully, take measures to protect the youth, and report the situation to the appropriate child protective services in the state.

There's a lot of confusion regarding being assertive. Sometimes people think that being assertive is rude... Or that it's being aggressive. The truth is, regardless of whether we are shy or outgoing, or introverted or extroverted, or don't like conflict or love to argue, we should all be assertive! It's part of healthy boundaries, and all healthy relationships have healthy boundaries.

Being assertive doesn't mean that we have to be loud or annoying. It just means that we identify our feelings, note when something is not right, gather our courage and take the steps to communicate when we feel something unsafe needs attention for ourselves, and for our friends.

Clarify the roles of adults, and safe friends: As we continue this discussion, it's important to recognize it's the job of adults to protect us from unsafe situations. Most people are safe, but there are people who will manipulate us or wish to harm us, and who do hurt us.

Youth can also be a "safe person" for others. This is called being a "safe friend." **As a youth, it's not your JOB (as youth) to protect others. It is not your responsibility, because you are youth.** But, when we do know that someone is hurt or hurting, then we **should try to help** by getting that information to a safe adult. Let's recap these really important points:

- Whose responsibility is it to keep youth safe? (ADULTS; it's the adult's job to protect youth)
- Can we, as youth, also help when we know there's a problem? (Yes, usually youth can help, too)
- How can we, as youth, help the most? (Take the information to a safe adult; a trustworthy person)

Note: The Lesson Leader should be careful to communicate to youth that they are not responsible for each other. Misinforming youth by saying that one person's welfare is a youth's responsibility could make a child feel more guilt if they weren't able to prevent or stop abuse from occurring for themselves or a friend. The distinction for this lesson is that there are times when youth are being abused, or they know a peer is in need of help, but, they don't always know the best way to assist. Being a safe friend means that children do the "right thing" for themselves, and for each other—meaning that they perform action, or intervene in safe ways when they are aware of a problem.

Tell safe adults when you need help; telling isn't "snitching": Even if we don't realize it, we all have many safe people in our lives who want to help us. However, they don't always know when we need help unless we actually tell them. Telling a safe adult when we, or others, need help is not "snitching" or "crossing the line." You have a right to be safe! Your friends have a right to be safe. If you know that there's important information about safety, adults should listen to you. If a safe adult isn't listening to you, take the information to another safe adult. Keep taking the information to a trustworthy person, and may a different trustworthy person, until you feel that you've been heard.

Remember: if you, or someone you know, has been abused—it's not your fault. There's nothing you did to cause the abuse. You are unique, you matter. Being happy and healthy, and having healthy and safe relationships is very important. If you're in a bad or unsafe situation (or know someone who is), it might be time to get some help.

Being assertive is about standing up for yourself. It's about expressing your thoughts, your feelings and your needs. However, keep in mind that when it comes to matters of health and safety, and abuse, it doesn't matter if you are assertive OR aggressive in your response. At the very least, assertiveness is necessary. But, an aggressive response is certainly OK, too.

PART 2: EXPLAIN AND APPLY THE "ASSERTIVE" CONTINUUM. Explain: If you look at the behaviors on this continuum: "assertive" behavior sits in between being "passive" and being "aggressive."

|-----Passive-----Assertive-----Aggressive-----|

Ask the youth to share circumstances where they might respond in each a passive, assertive and aggressive way. Help them understand that they may find themselves in between being specifically passive or assertive, or aggressive.

For each situation listen below, read the options aloud and ask whether the response is passive, aggressive, or assertive. Then, ask what the best course of action is, and, what a safe friend could do to help themselves or a friend. (An alternative option is to write these on a worksheet or project them onto a screen without the answers.)

1. Situation #1: Your teacher made a mistake averaging your grade.

- a. _____ Say: "My grade is different from what I think it should be. Would you calculate it again?"
- b. _____ Do nothing about the mistake, even if it affects your grade for the entire year.
- c. _____ Say: "Why are you always out to get me? You didn't average my grade right. I'm going to the principal and getting you fired."

2. Situation #2: The cashier in the cafeteria gives you the wrong change.

- _____ Say: "How dare you! You're trying to cheat me!"
- _____ Say: "Excuse me, I don't believe you gave me back the right amount of money."
- _____ Say nothing about the mistake to avoid conflict.

3. Situation #3: Your best friend asks you to do something that you think is wrong.

- _____ Say: "I don't feel comfortable doing that. I'd rather not."
- _____ Say: "Maybe, I'll think about it."
- _____ Say: "No way! You are crazy and you're going to get in trouble!"
- _____ Say: "I guess it will be all right."

Ask: Are there any special elements to consider? (Yes, depending on the situation, you may need to communicate with a safe adult.)

4. Situation #4: Your parent's good friend wants to show you images of naked people on his phone and tells you not to say anything to anyone.

- _____ Look at what is shown and do nothing.
- _____ Say: "NO, this is NOT OK." Try to leave the situation, and go and tell a safe adult.
- _____ Grab the phone and throw it, then go and tell a safe adult.

Ask: Are there any special elements to consider? (Yes; *truly, even though this is considered to be "aggressive behavior," it may not matter! You have a right to be safe and this person is not treating you with dignity or respect. You can be assertive OR aggressive when it comes to matters of health and safety and standing up for yourself or others.*)

5. Situation #5: Your best friend is being really secretive about talking to the teacher; and you saw some messages between them that made you feel worried. Your best friend made you promise not to tell anyone about what you saw, and you agreed. Now what?

- _____ Do nothing; you aren't quite sure anyone will believe you anyway.
- _____ Tell a safe adult about your concerns, even though you promised not to.
- _____ Go to the teacher and say, "If you do anything to hurt my friend, I'll hurt you."

Ask: Are there any special elements to consider? (Yes, It is not your job to "investigate" whether or not something amiss is occurring. If you can help by communicating concerns, do that!)

ACTIVITY OPTION #4: Assertiveness: Narrow the Scope, then Practice

Activity: This activity has 2 parts: a discussion, then time for application and role playing. Children are empowered to better protect themselves and help others by learning assertive language skills.

Background: Teaching children how to be more assertive involves several factors that are important for both the Lesson Leader and the youth to know, including breaking down commonly-held myths about what "assertive" means, increasing the youth's overall self confidence, helping them to understand the idea of self-respect and "being a friend to oneself" and to others, and giving them tools and the actual language needed to create and uphold boundaries, as well as avenues and safety networks for when they're uncomfortable, afraid or in need of help for themselves or others.

Preparation: In preparing for this activity, review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide*. Students will listen, then engage in a discussion, and will then break into groups for role-playing.

Directions: Invite the students to sit in seats or on the floor in a way that creates an atmosphere of togetherness. Lead and facilitate a dialog with youth about standing up for themselves and others by being assertive. Then, let them know there will be a group activity to practice assertiveness with role-playing.

Discussion: **PART 1: INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT OF ASSERTIVENESS AND SAFETY.** Consider the following:

SUPPLIES

Dry erase board and markers (optional)

Note: For the Lesson Leader, part of teaching children healthy, assertive behavior means honoring, strengthening and upholding the youth's boundaries when they set them. An assertive youth who is learning healthy boundaries needs to also know they have several safe adults as part of their safety network; someone they can go to for help regardless of the circumstances. Children do not always go to their parents when they are involved in an abusive situation for a variety of reasons, often because of fear of the reaction, and also for fear of getting into trouble. If you are the person with whom a child feels safe enough to disclose, then you must listen carefully, take measures to protect the youth, and report the situation to the appropriate child protective services in the state.

Say: There many times when assertive skills help you. Using these skills at home, with friends, with family and with people you know at school will allow you to be heard in a safe way. As we continue this discussion, it's important to recognize that it's the job of adults to protect us from unsafe situations. Most people are safe, but there are people who will manipulate us or wish to cause us harm, and who do hurt us.

Youth can also be a "safe person" for others. This is called being a "safe friend." **As a youth, it's not your JOB (as youth) to protect others. It is not your responsibility, because you are youth.** But, when we do know that someone is hurt or hurting, then we **should try to help** by getting that information to a safe adult. Let's recap these really important points:

- Whose responsibility is it to keep youth safe? (ADULTS; it's the adult's job to protect youth)
- Can we, as youth, also help when we know there's a problem? (Yes, usually youth can help, too)
- How can we, as youth, help the most? (Take the information to a safe adult; a trustworthy person)

Tell safe adults when you need help; when it comes to safety, telling isn't "snitching." Even if we don't realize it, we all have many safe people in our lives who want to help us. However, they don't always know when we need help unless we actually tell them. You have a right to be safe! Your friends have a right to be safe. If you know that there's important information about safety, adults should listen to you. If a safe adult isn't listening to you, take the information to another safe adult. Keep taking the information to a trustworthy person, and may a different trustworthy person, until you feel that you've been heard.

Ask: Are there times when you should *not* be assertive? (Allow "thinking" time and wait for volunteer responses. If no one comes forward you could share the following example). Example to share—If you were caught red handed cheating and were going to have consequences, I'd advise that you accept it, as that may not be a proper time to practice assertiveness skills; in this case, being what might appear to be "passive" or what is actually "resigned and accepting the consequences" may be more appropriate.

Ask: Are there times when you should be aggressive? Yes! When you are physically threatened and are defending yourself or someone else, but usually it's better to try to get away from any unstable or unsafe situation.

Explain: You might find that you are comfortable being **assertive** in some situations, that there are other times when you are passive, and still others when you are aggressive. Sometimes when we can tell we feel discomfort, we also know that we might need to place a boundary and be firm with that boundary. Safe adults should uphold our boundaries. This lesson will help you to improve in the areas. Think about how you act at school, with your parents, etc. You might notice differences in how you are in these environments depending on who is around you and how comfortable you feel.

We can all learn to be assertive. Most of us weren't born with these skills! Let's look at where some of our **passive behavior** comes from. You may have learned to be somewhat passive. Maybe you were told to be seen and not heard, or that it's selfish to ask for what you want. Perhaps you learned it was rude or disrespectful to say "no" to people when they ask you to do something or go somewhere. Maybe you don't know yet how to set healthy boundaries. Maybe you don't easily express your feelings or have safe people to talk to. Maybe you go along if someone asks you to go somewhere (even if you don't want to), and you most likely end up regretting that you did, but you don't know what else to do. Or, maybe you tend to use an **aggressive** style more. You are able to speak up for yourself, but at the expense of another person's feelings.

An assertive person expresses his or her thoughts, feelings and needs directly, while having empathy and taking into account the rights and feelings of others. As an assertive person, you are able to say "yes" or "no" to the offers of others. You are able to accept rejection of your offers without taking them personally. You state your desires, but don't necessarily get what you want. Being assertive doesn't guarantee that you get what you ask for, but you have the knowledge of having asked, and having made yourself clear, in a kind and purposeful way.

Say: It is important to know your personal rights when being assertive. **Ask** students if they can name some personal rights, and other facts about when it comes to boundaries and safety. Consider the following points in this discussion and then break into groups to prepare for the role-playing activities. The Lesson Leader may need to feed some of these bullets to the youth. You can be invited to write these down on paper or on the board.

Your Personal Rights and The Facts: Ask the students if they can name some personal rights, and other facts about when it comes to boundaries and safety. Consider these following points, then either break into groups or lead a larger group discussion with volunteers for the role-playing activities.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| ▪ You have a right to be safe. | ▪ You're allowed to make mistakes. | ▪ Your feelings matter. |
| ▪ You have a right to say, "No!" | ▪ You're allowed to change your mind at any time. | ▪ You Matter. |
| ▪ You have the right to say, "I don't know." | | ▪ You're allowed to have your own opinions. |

- You don't have to agree with others all of the time.
- You don't have to take the advice of others.
- It's OK to ask for help or support. You don't have to do it all alone. You're not bothering others if you ask for help.
- It's OK to let others know that you are in pain, are hurting, or if you just require some assistance.
- It's OK to talk to a safe adult when you have concerns about someone else; even if you already promised not to tell.
- It's OK to tell a safe adult when you feel uncomfortable with a touch or a behavior, whether it's in person, or online.

PART 2: APPLICATION AND ROLE PLAYING. Consider breaking into groups, and assign each group an individual role-playing activity, give them time to work through it and gather everyone back together to present the answers to the questions. Or, lead a large-group discussion from on onset, asking youth to volunteer ways to role play.

Read each of these scenarios aloud and ask the youth a series of questions for each scenario: First, what should you do with the information presented? What factors make it more challenging to be assertive? Then, what would you say to be a safe friend to yourself (if it were happening to you) or someone else (if it were happening to a friend)?

Scenario 1: You got a gift from your teacher that was just for you; your teacher said it was “your little secret.” You told your friend, who said that you need to tell your parents about the gift. But, your friend is clearly jealous.

Scenario 2: Your best friend has been struggling in a relationship with the most popular person in school. Everybody thinks they are perfect. But, you notice she has been really quiet lately, wears long sleeves, doesn't talk to you, has some bruises, and isn't eating as much anymore. You worry it has something to do with her relationship—but also think it CAN'T be that because he is a super nice guy. Your friend doesn't want to talk about it.

Scenario 3: Your aunt has been spending time with your friend, one on one, without you. Your friend says it's awesome and that your aunt is really cool, and asks you to be on the “lookout.” You feel uncomfortable and aren't sure why.

Scenario 4: Your dad's best friend keeps touching you a lot. It's not on your private parts, but it's making you feel uncomfortable. Your family is right there and they don't notice anything weird.

Scenario 5: Your friend tells her parent that an adult at church hurt her and touched her private parts. The person is really important in the community. The parent doesn't believe your friend and says not to exaggerate.

Scenario 6: You are playing a game on the Internet when another gamer starts bullying other players. The gamer threatens to leak private information about others if they don't share videos of themselves online.

Scenario 7: Your friend receives a naked photo of girl at school on his phone. He then texts it to you and says: “pass it on.”

Concluding statements: Review the terms passive, aggressive and assertive, and check for understanding by asking for a show of hands with heads down and eyes shut—**Ask:** “How many of you are comfortable with being assertive?” “Now, how many of you would be willing to be a safe friend if someone else needed help?”

Remember: if you, or someone you know, has been abused—it's not your fault. There's nothing that you did to cause the abuse. You are unique, you matter. Being happy and healthy, and having healthy and safe relationships is very important. If you're in a bad or unsafe situation (or know someone who is), it might be time to get some help.

Being assertive is about standing up for yourself. It's about expressing your thoughts, your feelings and your needs. However, keep in mind that when it comes to matters of health and safety, and abuse, it doesn't matter if you are assertive OR aggressive in your response. At the very least, assertiveness is necessary. But, an “aggressive” response is certainly OK, too.

Note: The Lesson Leader should be careful to communicate that youth are *not* responsible for each other. Misinforming youth by saying that one person's welfare is a youth's responsibility could make a child feel more guilt if they weren't able to prevent or stop abuse from occurring for themselves or a friend. The distinction for this lesson is that there are times when youth are being abused, or they know a peer is in need of help, but, they don't always know the best way to assist. Being a safe friend means that youth do the “right thing” for themselves, and for each other—meaning that they perform action, or intervene in safe ways when they are aware of a problem.

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: Sometimes when things happen, I get scared. Sometimes I just get mixed up—like when a person I care about does something that makes me feel uncomfortable or scared. When that happens, help me remember that I am special and give me courage to tell an adult what happened. Thank you for loving me and for giving me safe adults and parents who want to keep me safe and happy. Amen