SAFER, SMARTER TEENS

BE THE CHANGE

PARENT LETTER 1: PERSONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The first lesson of the ***Safer, Smarter Teens: Be The Change*** curriculum featured an introduction by advocate Lauren Book. Lauren shares that she is a survivor of sexual abuse who created the Lauren's Kids foundation in 2007. As Chief Executive Officer of the Lauren's Kids foundation, she developed the *Safer, Smarter Teens: Be The Change* curriculum to protect and empower students because 95% of child sexual abuse is preventable through education and awareness. Lauren shared that she endured abuse during middle and high school, at the hands of a trusted caregiver. Due to feelings of shame and embarrassment, she kept the abuse a secret. In the lesson, Lauren emphasized the importance of standing up for your personal rights, taking responsibility for yourself, and seeking help in order to keep yourself safe.

The first lesson also covered personal rights and responsibilities. Students were introduced to the foundation of the Bill of Rights, which provides a list of fundamental privileges and freedoms. This list included rights such as the right to speak up for yourself; the right to share your thoughts, feelings, and ideas; and the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Students also have responsibilities such as communicating what they think, treating others with respect and dignity, and standing up for themselves and others. These rights and responsibilities provided the foundation for students to create their own Personal Bill of Rights to include individual rights and liberties.

Students learned about the communication skills needed to protect their personal rights. Activities helped students gain insight into their own communication styles as well as the communication styles of others. The lesson increased awareness of communication styles and how communication styles can be used to manipulate others.

PARENT CONNECTION:

Always keep the lines of communication open. Helping your child feel comfortable coming to you to talk about important and difficult issues is essential to ensuring his or her safety. Take time to discuss personal rights, and help your child understand the following points:

- Your body belongs to you.
- You have the right to say no when it comes to your body.
- Past permission or activities does not give permission for or obligate you to future activities.
- It is not okay for any adult to engage in an inappropriate relationship with a teenager.
- You deserve to always be treated with respect.
- It's always okay to seek help.

TIPS TO FURTHER TODAY'S LESSON:

- Build a trusting relationship with your child through open communication.
- Spend time together and be a part of your teenager's life.
- Be willing to listen. This can start by asking your teenager for input on making family decisions, from something as simple as what to have for dinner or watch on TV to where the family should go on vacation.
- Be a role model by talking with your child about personal safety, rights, and responsibilities.
- Timing is everything. Look for those "teachable moments" when you can naturally connect what is happening at that moment with your teenager in his or her life. You may be watching a movie or see something at the mall that can initiate a conversation about personal safety.
- Stay calm when your teenager divulges sensitive information. Getting upset and angry will close the lines of communication.
- Focus on the positive. During conversations, point out your teenager's strengths and build on those to expand his or her repertoire of personal safety skills.