



Grade 6

CAREGIVER CONNECTION

Dear Caregiver, Parent, or Guardian,

Building on previous lessons, this Caregiver Connection shares what students are learning in Lesson 2 of the *Safer, Smarter Teens* curriculum and provides simple ways for caregivers to support and reinforce these skills at home.

Lesson 2: Body Boundaries

Middle school students are forming new friendships, seeking peer approval, and interacting with a wide range of people. It is important to learn how to establish and maintain **safe relationships**. Everyone has the right to set their own **boundaries** and determine what feels comfortable or uncomfortable for them. Safe relationships are built on mutual respect, shared decision-making, and a **balance of power**. Listening to your **guiding voice** can help to identify the **red flags** that signal an **unsafe relationship**.

In this lesson, your child will be introduced to a new safety skill called **T.F.A. (Think, Feel, Act)**. This tool allows students to pause and assess situations by pausing to **Think** through what's happening, decide how the situation makes them **Feel**, and choosing a safe way to **Act** or respond — with a confident, appropriate **power play** to protect themselves and others, seeking help from a trusted adult if necessary. Practicing these skills empowers students to build and maintain safe, respectful relationships.

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As adolescents' worlds expand, they begin navigating a wider range of relationships and interactions with peers, older students, and adults. A desire to fit in or be accepted can sometimes make it harder for pre-teens and teens to recognize when a situation has become uncomfortable or unsafe. By keeping the lines of communication open, you can help your child feel comfortable coming to you with difficult issues. Review the concepts of **safe vs. unsafe relationships** and the **balance of power in relationships** with your child. Remind your child that when someone is feeling pressured to do something that makes them uncomfortable, this is unsafe, and that they have the right to decide their **body boundaries**. We must always remind children that if they are in a situation that feels uncomfortable or unsafe, it is "OK to say **NO**" using an **assertive voice**.

Tips to Further Today's Lesson:

Discuss with your child the concepts introduced in lesson two. For example, the idea that they have the right to set personal and body boundaries and expect them to be respected. You might ask, “Is it ok to go along with something you know and feel to be wrong to maintain a friendship?” Or “Can you identify red flags in unsafe relationships?” Remind your child that if someone does not respect their boundaries, they can speak up and say they are uncomfortable. If the behavior continues or involves safety, they should tell a trusted adult.

Have the Difficult Discussions

Keeping the lines of communication open with your child is an important part of being a trusted adult in their life. Talking with your child regarding uncomfortable inner feelings, how to say “no” to unsafe situations, setting and defending clear boundaries, using technology appropriately, and recognizing the warning signs of unsafe relationships with an imbalance of power will not only help your child stay safe, but will help keep lines of communication open between you and your child.

Safer, Smarter Teens does not teach anything related to sex education, but we do recommend that caregivers teach **the proper anatomical names of private body parts** and reinforce that children have the right to keep their bodies safe. To avoid being victimized by predators, children must know it’s okay for them to say “no” any time a touch of any kind makes them uncomfortable and that they have power over their own bodies. Children should not be forced to kiss or hug family members if they don’t feel like it, even if the touch is harmless. Forcing a child to kiss, hug, or sit on someone’s lap when they don’t want to, sends a subtle and dangerous message that they are not in control of their own bodies and that adults hold the power. Encourage your child to offer a high five, handshake, or fist bump if they do not want to accept a hug or kiss from a family member or friend.

Human Trafficking

In this *Safer, Smarter Schools* middle school lesson, students learn how to establish and maintain healthy relationships built on respect, balance of power, and personal boundaries—key protective factors in preventing grooming, coercion, and exploitation. As adolescents navigate new friendships and social pressures, the lesson reinforces that everyone has the right to set their own comfort levels and say “no” when something feels unsafe or unbalanced.

By distinguishing between healthy and safe, versus **unsafe relationships**, discussing the effects of peer pressure, and developing assertive communication skills, students strengthen their ability to make safe choices, recognize manipulation, and maintain control of their **personal power** and **boundaries**.

How to Respond to Disclosure of Abuse or Exploitation

An adult's reaction to disclosure plays an important role in the beginning of the healing process for the child. Resist the urge to react strongly to the news or display anger toward the abuser. Instead, consider the following:

What to Say:

"I believe you."

"I'm really glad that you told me. It took a lot of courage to tell me."

"It's not your fault."

"We will work together to get you help. I will need to tell some other people who help protect children."

Be cautious with telling a child who has disclosed that "everything will be all right." There are many uncertainties that surround disclosure, emotions, and steps to recovery. Consider, instead, telling a child that they are important, people care about them and their safety, and that people will work to be with and support them moving forward.

Action Steps:

- If you know or suspect a child has become the victim of sexual abuse, you must make a report immediately. Find your local [reporting agency](#) or call **1-800-4-A-CHILD** (224453).
- Please make sure you are following your state/county/district/LEA policies regarding reporting digital safety and physical abuse.
- In many states, all citizens are considered mandatory reporters, and it is your responsibility to follow the proper protocols within 24 hours to report abuse.
- Access and share [The Guide to Hope and Healing](#) for guidance to recognize, report, and respond to a child who discloses.
- [Take It Down](#): This service is one step you can take to help remove online nude, partially nude, or sexually explicit photos and videos taken before the age of 18.

For more ways to talk to your child about staying safe, visit [safersmarterfamilies.org](#) and [safersmarterteens.org](#). For additional resources, visit [laurenskids.org](#).

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